

ST. AUGUSTINE  
ON THE PSALMS

*ENARRATIONES IN PSALMOS*

# ANCIENT CHRISTIAN WRITERS

THE WORKS OF THE FATHERS IN TRANSLATION

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# ST. AUGUSTINE ON THE PSALMS

TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED  
BY

DAME SCHOLASTICA HEBGIN  
AND  
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ST. AUGUSTINE  
ON THE PSALMS

*ENARRATIONES IN PSALMOS*



## FIRST DISCOURSE ON PSALM 30

1. [Verse 1] *Unto the end, a Psalm for David himself in ecstasy.*<sup>1</sup> Unto the end, a Psalm for David himself, for the Mediator strong of hand amid persecution. Now the word “ecstasy” added to the title denotes a mind beside itself as a result either of fright or of some revelation. But the Psalm we are studying shows us principally the fear felt by God’s people, alarmed at world-wide persecution and the general weakening of faith. First, then, it is the Mediator Himself who speaks; afterwards the people, redeemed by His blood, give thanks; finally, in great agitation the first speaker resumes, in a long passage which constitutes the “ecstasy.” The actual person of the prophet is only twice introduced, towards the end and in the final verse.

2. [V. 2] *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded.* In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be put to confusion when insulted as if I were a man resembling the rest of men. *In thy justice rescue me and deliver me.*<sup>2</sup> In thy justice rescue me from the pit of death and deliver me from those it engulfs.

3. [V. 3] *Bow down thy ear to me.* Hear me in my abjection: draw near to me. *Make haste to deliver me.* Delay not my separation from sinners—as that of all who believe in me is delayed—until the end of the world. *Be thou unto me a God, a protector.* Be thou, O God, my protector. *And a house of refuge to save me,* as a sure sanctuary to which I may fly to find safety.

4. [V. 4] *For thou art my strength and my refuge.* For thou art my strength in bearing with my persecutors, and

my refuge in which I can escape from them. *And for thy name's sake thou wilt be my leader and nourish me.* In order to make thy name known to all nations, I shall follow thy will in all things, and by gradually gathering the saints around me thou wilt complete my body and give it its perfect stature.

5. [V. 5] *Thou wilt bring me out of this trap<sup>3</sup> which they have hidden for me.* Thou wilt draw me out of these secret snares they have laid for me. *For thou art my protector.*

6. [V. 6] *Into thy hands I commend my spirit.* I confide to thy power this soul which I am so speedily to regain. *Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth.* Let a people redeemed by the passion of their Lord and gladdened by the glorification of their Head cry aloud: *Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth.*

7. [V. 7] *Thou hast hated them that regard vanities to no purpose.* Thou hast hated those who set value on the false happiness of the world. *But I have hoped in the Lord.*

8. [V. 8] *I will be glad and delight in thy mercy,* which never deceives me. *Because thou hast regarded my humility* by which thou hast made me subject to vanity in hope.<sup>4</sup> *Thou hast saved my soul out of distresses.* Thou hast delivered my soul from the straits of fear, that I may serve thee with unfettered charity.

9. [V. 9] *And thou hast not shut me up in the hands of the enemy.* Thou hast not confined me so that I have no outlet to breathe freely, nor hast thou abandoned me to the everlasting power of the devil, ever ready to ensnare with the covetous desires of this world and to terrify with death. *Thou hast set my feet in a spacious place.* The resurrection of my Lord of which I am certain, and the

promise of my own, have released my love from bonds of fear, so that it advances evermore into the broad expanses of freedom.

10. [V. 10] *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am afflicted.* But what is this unlooked-for cruelty on the part of my persecutors, which strikes me with dread? *Have mercy on me, O Lord.* It is not death which frightens me now but the thought of tortures and torments. *My eye is troubled with wrath.* Fearing to be abandoned, I kept my eye fixed upon thee; but thy anger has confused its vision. *My soul and my belly.* This same anger has also perturbed my soul, and my memory which stored up for me all that my God had endured for my sake and all that He had promised me.

11. [V. 11] *For my life is wasted with grief.* For this is my life, to give praise to thee. But it wasted away with grief when the enemy said: Put them to the torture until they make a denial. *And my years in sighs.* Death does not cut short my days in this world; I am left to live on and spend my life in sighs. *My strength is weakened through need.* This body of mine needs health and is not spared tortures; my body needs death, yet death is denied; and this double need has undermined my confidence. *And my bones are disturbed.* And my constancy has wavered.

12. [V. 12] *I am become a reproach among all my enemies.* All the wicked are my enemies, yet they undergo torture for their crimes only until they admit their guilt; but my reproach is much greater than theirs, since I confess my fault only to meet, not with death, but with keener torments. *And very much to my neighbors.* This has seemed excessive to those who were almost ready to acknowledge thee, almost ready to embrace the faith I hold. *And a fear to my acquaintance.* The sight of my

hideous suffering has struck fear into my acquaintances. *They that saw me fled without from me.* Because they did not realize my inward and invisible hope, they turned from me and threw themselves into superficial and visible joys.

13. [V. 13] *I am forgotten as one dead from the heart.* And they have clean forgotten me, as if I were a man perished out of their very mind. *I am become as a vessel that is destroyed.* I seem to myself to have lost my usefulness in the Lord's service, living in this world without gaining anyone, since each is afraid to join my company.

14. [V. 14] *For I have heard the blame of many that dwell round about.* In my pilgrimage here below, I have listened to the derision of the mob surrounding me on every side, as they tread the wheel of time and refuse to return with me to their native country in eternity. *While those men assembled together against me, they consulted to take away my life.* To make my soul further their plans, whereas by death it could easily elude their grasp, they hatched a plot which would not allow me even to die.

15. [V. 15] *But I have put my trust in thee, O Lord. I said: Thou art my God.* For thou hast not suffered change, and thou dost correct only to save.

16. [V. 16] *My lots are in thy hands.* My destiny is in thy power. For I cannot see any merit whereby, amid the general ungodliness of the human race, thou shouldst single me out for salvation; and if there exists in thy counsels a just and secret order in thy choice of me, it has been my fortune to gain my Lord's vesture<sup>5</sup> without knowing of it. *Deliver me out of the hands of my enemies.*

17. [V. 17] *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.* Show forth to men who do not consider me thine, that thy



countenance is favorably turned towards me and that I am thy servant. *Save me in thy mercy.*

18. [V. 18] *Let me not be confounded, O Lord, for I have called upon thee.* O Lord, let me not blush before those who revile me for having had recourse to thee. *Let the wicked be ashamed and be brought down to hell.* Let them rather be put to confusion who call upon stones and are kindred with darkness.

19. [V. 19] *Let deceitful lips be made dumb.* By showing forth to the peoples thy mysteries wrought in me, strike dumb with astonishment the lips of those who invent lies against me. *Which speak iniquity against the just, with pride and contempt:* Which utter blasphemy against Christ in their haughty pride, despising Him as a mere man who suffered crucifixion.

20. [V. 20, 21] *O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord.* At this point the prophet breaks into a cry as he surveys and marvels at the richness of thy sweetness in its varied manifestations, O Lord. *Which thou hast hidden from them that fear thee.*<sup>6</sup> Thou dost deeply love even those thou reprovest, but for fear that they should lead negligent lives through heedless unconcern, thou dost conceal the sweetness of thy love from those for whom thy fear is wholesome. *Which thou hast wrought for them that hope in thee.* But thou hast brought this sweetness to perfection for those who put their trust in thee, for thou wilt never deprive them of what they steadfastly hope for even to the end. *In the sight of the sons of men.* It is not concealed from the sons of men, who live no longer according to Adam but according to the Son of Man. *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy face:* that everlasting resting place in the covert of the knowledge of thyself which thou art reserving for all who

trust in thee. *From the disturbance of men*; that henceforth human strife may never trouble their peace.

21. [V. 21] *Thou shalt protect them in thy tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues.* Meanwhile, as long as they are exposed to the mockery of evil tongues, asking: "Who can be certain of it?" or: "Who has ever come back from thence?", thou wilt protect them in the tabernacle of faith, of faith in those deeds which our Lord wrought and endured in this life on our behalf.

22. [V. 22] *Blessed be the Lord, for He hath shown His wonderful mercy in a fenced city.* Blessed be the Lord, because He has followed up the chastisement of most bitter persecutions by showing forth His admirable mercy to men throughout a world which embraces the circle of all mankind.

23. [V. 23] *I said in my ecstasy.* Here the people take up the theme with the words: As for me, stupefied in the face of the implacable persecution of the pagans, I have declared: *I am cast away from before thy eyes*: for if thou wert mindful of me, thou wouldst not leave me in such suffering. *Therefore, O Lord, thou hast heard the voice of my prayer when I cried to thee.* Therefore, thou hast set bounds to thy correction, and to show that I am the object of thy solicitude thou hast heard, O Lord, the cry of my supplication which I sent up when weighed down by tribulation.

24. [V. 24] *O love the Lord, all ye His saints.* Once more in his admiration of what he beholds, the prophet cries out in invitation to men: *O love the Lord, all ye His saints, for the Lord will require truth. And if the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*<sup>7</sup> *And will repay them that act exceedingly proudly.*<sup>8</sup> He will punish those who, while convinced of

the truth, refuse to amend because of their deep-rooted pride.

25. [V. 25] *Do ye manfully, and let your heart be strengthened*: Faint not in well-doing so that you may reap in due season. *All ye that hope in the Lord*. In other words, hope in the Lord, all you who fear Him, and pay Him due worship.

## SECOND DISCOURSE ON PSALM 30<sup>1</sup>

1. Let us, as best we can, search into the mysteries of the Psalm we have just chanted<sup>2</sup> in order to draw from them some thoughts which will fall upon your ears and engrave themselves on your minds. The title runs: [Verse 1] *Unto the end, a Psalm for David in an ecstasy*. We know the meaning of *Unto the end*, if we know Christ; as the Apostle says: *For the end of the law is Christ, unto justice to every one that believeth*,<sup>3</sup> an end which does not destroy but perfects. We use the word "end" in two senses: either to express the destruction of what once had being, or to express the completion of a work once begun. *Unto the end*, therefore, denotes unto Christ.

2. *A Psalm for David in an ecstasy*.<sup>4</sup> The Greek word *ecstasis*, as far as one can translate it into Latin, may be expressed by the use of the single word *excessus*, a rapture; for, strictly speaking, a mental rapture is usually termed an ecstasy. Now two inferences may be drawn from a mind rapt out of itself: there is either excessive fear or such concentration upon things of heaven that, to some extent, things of earth slip away from consciousness. Such was the ecstasy of the saints to whom God revealed the hidden things which so far surpass this world. This is the mental rapture or ecstasy which Paul has described in

speaking of himself: *For whether we be transported in mind, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for you. For the charity of Christ presseth us.*<sup>5</sup> If, that is, we wished to perform only such acts and contemplate only such things as we behold in rapture of mind, we should not be occupied with you but should be immersed in things of heaven, to all appearances despising you. And how could you, so faltering of foot, follow us to those more sublime and secret regions, did not the charity of Christ—*who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant*<sup>6</sup>—again compel us to realize that we ourselves are servants? Though we are not ungrateful to Him who has bestowed on us the more exalted gifts, yet for their sakes who are weak we should not despise the humbler ones, but rather attune ourselves to those who cannot behold sublime truths as we do. *Whether we be transported in mind,* says the Apostle, *it is to God.* For He ever beholds what we see only in ecstasy of soul; He alone unveils to us His secrets. In actual fact, the man who speaks thus is the man who tells us that he was caught up and rapt to the third heaven, where he heard ineffable words which man is not allowed to utter. Such, however, was his transport of mind that he states: *Whether in the body or out of the body, I know not, God knoweth.*<sup>7</sup> If, therefore, such be the stupor of mind, such the ecstasy, which the title of the Psalm indicates, then assuredly we may count upon some weighty and profound revelations in store from the author of the Psalm, that is, the prophet; or rather, the Holy Spirit speaking by the prophet.

3. If, on the other hand, the ecstasy here indicates panic, such an interpretation is by no means foreign to the context of the Psalm. For the Psalmist seems about to tell of



anguish allied with great dread. But whose dread? Because the Psalm is entitled *Unto the end*, and we understand Christ to be the end, is it then Christ's? Or is the dread possibly our own? May we lawfully conclude that the dread was in Christ as His passion drew near, when it was for that very purpose He had come? When He arrived at what He had come to seek, was He affrighted at the prospect of death? If He had been so absolutely man as not to be God, might He not rather have rejoiced over His forthcoming resurrection than been fear-stricken at His forthcoming death? Nevertheless, because He deigned to take the form of a servant and by this means clothe us with Himself, He who did not disdain to take us up into Himself has not disdained to transfigure us in Himself, nor to use our language so that we might appropriate His. For this wondrous partnership has been set up,<sup>8</sup> this divine bargain has been concluded, this mutual traffic has been solemnly agreed upon in this world by the heavenly Merchant. He came to receive outrages, to bestow dignities; He came to drain the cup of suffering, to bestow salvation; He came to undergo death, to bestow life. When He was faced with death, therefore, in that which He took of ours, He was fear-stricken, not in His own person, but in us. For He said that His soul was sorrowful even unto death;<sup>9</sup> and undoubtedly every single one of us spoke together with Him. For without Him we are nothing; in Him Christ as well as ourselves. Why? Because the whole Christ consists of Head and Body: the Head, the Saviour of the Body, He who has already ascended into heaven; and the Body, the Church toiling here on earth.<sup>10</sup> Now unless this Body was united to its Head by the bond of charity, so that Head and Body constituted but one Person, He would not, when reproving a certain persecutor, say from heaven:

*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*<sup>11</sup> When He was already throned in heaven where no human being could touch Him, how was Saul, raging on earth against the Christians, inflicting injury in any way upon Him? He does not say, "Why my saints?", "my servants?", but, *Why persecutest thou me?* that is, "Why my members?" The Head was crying out on behalf of the members, and the Head was transforming the members into Himself. For the tongue makes itself the mouthpiece of the foot. Suppose one's foot is trampled on in a crowd and is bruised, the tongue cries aloud: "You are treading on me." It does not say: "You are treading on my foot"; it maintains that the tongue, which nobody has touched, is itself being trodden upon. The foot which is trodden on is not separated from the tongue.<sup>12</sup>

By analogy, therefore, we may rightly construe the word "ecstasy" as dread. How am I to explain it, brethren? If no distress whatsoever were to agitate those about to suffer, would our Lord have spoken to Peter himself the words we have heard said on the birthday of the apostles, when He foretold to him his future suffering: *When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not? And this*, he says, *He said, signifying by what death he should die.*<sup>13</sup> Now if the Apostle Peter, a man of such great holiness, went unwillingly whither he would not (against his consent did he die, yet with full consent was he crowned), what wonder if a certain dread is mingled with suffering even of just men, even of saints? Dread proceeds from human weakness, hope from the divine assurance. You feel dread, that is natural to you; you hope, that is the gift of God within you. And better it is to recognize your own

self in your dread, so that your deliverance may make you glorify Him who created you. Let human weakness tremble in its fear; such fear bespeaks no failure of the divine mercy. In fact, it is because he is fear-stricken that the Psalmist opens with the cry: *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded.* Notice how he is both fear-stricken and trusting: this dread, you see, is not bereft of hope. Although the human heart feels a certain disquietude, yet withal divine comfort has not entirely departed.

4. It is Christ, therefore, who here speaks in the prophet; yes, I dare to affirm, Christ is speaking. The prophet will utter certain things in this Psalm which may seem impossible of application to Christ, to that excellence of our Head, above all to that Word which in the beginning was God abiding with God.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes, too, certain other things will be said which seem scarcely relevant to Him who has taken the form of a servant, the form He took from the Virgin.<sup>15</sup> And yet it is Christ speaking, because in Christ's members Christ Himself speaks. And that you may understand that Christ the Head together with His Body form but One, He Himself, when speaking of marriage, declares: *They two shall be in one flesh. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh.*<sup>16</sup> But does He say this, perhaps, of any marriage? Listen to the apostle Paul: *And they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the Church.*<sup>17</sup> Whereas there are two, there issues but one indubitable person, from Head and Body, from bridegroom and bride. Now the marvelous surpassing unity of this person the prophet Isaias also acclaims; for Christ, prophesying likewise through his lips, says: *As a bridegroom he has bound me with a crown, and as a bride he*

*has adorned me with ornaments.*<sup>18</sup> He terms Himself both bridegroom and bride. Why bridegroom and why bride, unless because they shall be two in one flesh? If two in one flesh, why not two in one voice? Allow that Christ is speaking, therefore, because in Christ the Church speaks, and in the Church Christ speaks: the Body in the Head, the Head in the Body. Listen to the Apostle expressing this same point very clearly: *For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body, so also is Christ.*<sup>19</sup> In speaking of Christ's members, that is, of the faithful, he does not say, "so also are the members of Christ"; but the sum of all his observations he has denoted as Christ. For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body, so also is Christ many members, one Body. All of us therefore are counted as one with Christ our Head; without our Head we count for nothing. Why? Because with our Head we are the vine; without our Head (which God forbid) lopped branches destined not for any useful purpose of the gardeners but merely for the fire. He Himself says so in the Gospel: *I am the vine, you the branches; my Father is the husbandman; and Without me, He says, you can do nothing.*<sup>20</sup> O Lord, if without thee nothing, then in thee all things. For indeed whatever work He performs by our means seems our own doing. Without us He has the power to do much, yea, everything; without Him we can do absolutely nothing.

5. [V. 2] Consequently whatever the ecstasy, whether bewildered from fear or joy, the words spoken are apt. Let our speech be in the Body of Christ, let us all speak as a single person, because all form a single whole. Let our words be: *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be*



*confounded*. I tremble, he says, at that confusion which endures everlastingly. For there is a certain transient confusion which is wholesome, the anxiety of a mind examining its bygone sins, growing fearful in the examination, in its fear feeling ashamed, in its shame purposing to amend. Hence too the Apostle asks: *What fruit therefore had you then in those things of which you are now ashamed?*<sup>21</sup> He says in effect that the faithful are now abashed, not by their gifts of the present but by their sins of the past. Far be it from every Christian to feel afraid of confusion of this sort; indeed, if he does not feel this kind, he will feel that without end. What is everlasting confusion? The fulfilment of the saying: *And their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them.*<sup>22</sup> And as their iniquities stand against them to convict them, the whole evil flock will find themselves on the left hand like goats separated from sheep and will hear: *Depart into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels*. They ask why? *For I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat.*<sup>23</sup> They showed contempt when they gave no food to Christ who hungered, no drink to Him in His thirst, when they did not clothe Him in His nakedness, did not receive Him as a stranger, did not visit Him in sickness—then it was they showed contempt. When these things begin to be enumerated before them, they will be confounded and their confusion will be everlasting. It is this which awakens fear in the man who, either fear-stricken or transported in mind to God, makes this petition: *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded*.

6. *In thy justice rescue me and deliver me*: For if thou dost scrutinize any justice of mine, thou wilt condemn me. *In thy justice rescue me*. There is, in fact, a justice belong-

ing to God which becomes ours also by God's gift to us. But even so it is termed God's justice for fear that man should consider himself endowed with justice of himself. This is what the Apostle Paul declares: *To him that believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reputed to justice.*<sup>24</sup> (What is the meaning of "that justifieth the ungodly"? He who makes a just man out of a sinner.) Because the Jews, on the other hand, reckoned that they could fulfil all due observance by their own efforts,<sup>25</sup> they stumbled at the stumbling stone and the rock of scandal,<sup>26</sup> and they did not acknowledge the grace of Christ. For they accepted the Law which could render them transgressors<sup>27</sup> but could not absolve them from their transgression. And what does the Apostle say of them? *For I bear them witness, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*<sup>28</sup> What does he mean by his statement that the Jews *have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge*? Listen to the explanation of *not according to knowledge*: *For they, not knowing the justice of God, and seeking to establish their own, have not submitted themselves to the justice of God.* If then the zeal they have for God is not according to knowledge, because they do not recognize God's justice and would institute a mode of their own as if they were rendered just of themselves, it follows that they have not experienced God's grace because they would not be saved gratis. What man is saved gratis? That man in whom his Saviour finds cause not for recompense but for condemnation, not for reward but for punishment. If He act strictly according to the ordinance prescribed by the Law, the sinner must needs stand condemned. If He were to act according to this code, whom would He set free? He found every man a sinner: only He Himself who found all men sinners came

without sin. This fact the Apostle expresses: *For all have sinned and do need the glory of God.*<sup>29</sup> What does it mean to *need the glory of God*? It means that it is He who sets at liberty, not you. Since you cannot set yourself at liberty, you need a deliverer. Why preen yourself? Why so confident in the Law and justice? Do you not perceive what is inwardly raging within yourself, from yourself, against yourself? Do you not hear someone warring, making confession, longing for aid in the fight? Do you not hear our Lord's athlete seeking for help in his struggle from the umpire of the contest? For God does not look on till you have finished the fight as the exhibitor of the games looks on when you happen to be contending in the amphitheater.<sup>30</sup> The latter can award you the trophy if victorious; lend you aid in danger he cannot. God is no such mere onlooker. Observe now, take note of him who declares: *For I am delighted with the law of God according to the inward man: But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord.*<sup>31</sup> Why grace? Because it is a free gift. Why is it a free gift? Because your own merits have not paved the way; God's favors have forestalled you. To Him, then, who sets us free be the glory. *For all have sinned and do need the glory of God. Therefore, in thee, O Lord, have I hoped, not in myself; let me never be confounded, because my trust is in Him who never puts to confusion. In thy justice rescue me and deliver me.* Because thou hast not discovered in me any justice of my own, rescue me in thine; that is, let that rescue me which imparts justification, which makes an ungodly man godly, an unrighteous man righteous, a blind

man clear-sighted, sets a falling man on his feet, sends a mourner on his way rejoicing. This it is which makes me free, not I myself. *In thy justice rescue me and deliver me.*

7. [V. 3] *Bow down thy ear to me.* God did this when He sent Christ Himself to us. God sent to us One who, bowing down, wrote with His finger on the ground, when the woman who had committed adultery was brought to Him for punishment.<sup>32</sup> But He had already stooped to earth, or rather, God had stooped to man, who had been told: *Earth thou art, and to the earth thou shalt go.*<sup>33</sup> Now God does not bow down His ear as if in physical space nor is He limited by the restrictions of these bodily members of ours. Far be it from human speculations to formulate fancies such as these. God is Truth. Truth is neither square, nor round, nor long.<sup>34</sup> It is everywhere present if the eye of the heart be open to receive it. And yet, notwithstanding, God bows down His ear to us, He lets fall His mercy upon us. What greater mercy than to give us His only Son, not merely to live with us but to die for us? *Bow down thy ear to me.*

8. *Make haste to deliver me.* God has indeed already heard him in his petition when he cries, *Make haste.* Now this phrase was used for the following reason: to lead you to realize that all this earthly time of ours which seems as it passes to be so protracted is, in reality, but a flash.<sup>35</sup> Whatever comes to an end is not of long duration. The span from Adam to this very hour has run its course; assuredly much more time has already elapsed than lies in the future.<sup>36</sup> If Adam were still alive and were to die today, what benefit would he derive from such a prolonged existence, from having survived to such a great age? Why then this idea of "haste"? Because life is fleeting and what seems like an eternity to you, to God is a mere moment.



That life is fleeting, the Psalmist had already grasped in ecstasy. *Make haste to deliver me. Be thou unto me a God, a protector. And a house of refuge to save me.* Be thou my house of refuge, God my protector, my house of refuge. For I am sometimes beset with peril and would take to flight. Whither take to flight? To what spot fly unharmed? To what mountain? What cave? To what guarded fastness? What citadel can I hold? With what ramparts be encircled? Wheresoever I go, my own self accompanies me. Yes truly, O man, you can avoid whatever you will, save only your own conscience.<sup>37</sup> Go into your house, lie down upon your bed, enter into your innermost chamber; no place so secret can you possess that you are able to escape your own conscience if your sins are gnawing it. Hence with truth has he exclaimed: *Make haste to deliver me and in thy justice rescue me*, so that thou mayest remit my sins and accomplish thine own justice within me. It is thou who wilt be my house of refuge; to thee do I have recourse. For whither shall I escape from thee? Is God angry with you, where will you take cover? Listen to what the Psalmist, in his fear of God's anger, says in another Psalm: *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art present.*<sup>38</sup> Whithersoever I go, there I find thee. If thou art offended, I experience thy avenging justice; if thou art gracious, thine aid. No other course remains, therefore, save to fly unto thee, not away from thee. To elude a human master whose servant you are, you make your escape to places where your master does not happen to be. To evade God, fly to our Lord! There is, in fact, no spot where you can escape God. In the eyes of the Almighty, all things are present and naked. Be thou then, he says, my

house of refuge. For if I am not sound, how can I fly? Make me sound and I take wing to thee. But if thou dost not make me sound, I cannot even walk, how then can I fly? Where was he to go, that man who was left half-dead on the roadside wounded by the blows of robbers, where could he take refuge, unable to walk as he was? The man whom the priest on his journey passed by, the Levite on his journey passed by, the Samaritan on his journey treated with compassion.<sup>39</sup> The Samaritan is our Lord Himself who has taken pity on the whole human race. The word Samarite is interpreted "watchman." Who then will be our watchman if He deserts us? When the Jews taunted Him with the words: *Do we not say well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?*<sup>40</sup> it was with good reason that He denied the one charge and admitted the other. *I have not a devil*, He answered. He did not say, "I am not a Samaritan," for He thereby wished it to be inferred that He is our keeper. Moved with pity, therefore, He went up to the man, took care of him, brought him to an inn, discharged His work of mercy to the full. Henceforth the man can walk, he can even soar. Whither should he soar but to God, where he has made himself a house of refuge?

9. [V. 4] *For thou art my strength and my refuge, and for thy name's sake thou wilt be my leader and nourish me*: not for any merit of mine but *for thy name's sake*; not because I am worthy of it but that thou mayest be glorified. *Thou wilt be my leader*, so that I never go astray from thee, *and nourish me* that I may have the strength to take the food with which thou dost feed the angels. Here below, He who has promised us heavenly food has nourished us on milk, having recourse to a mother's tenderness.<sup>41</sup> For just as a mother, suckling her infant, transfers from her flesh the very same food which otherwise

would be unsuited to the babe (the little one actually receives what he would have received at table, but the food conveyed through the flesh is adapted to the child), so our Lord, in order to convert His wisdom into milk for our benefit, came to us clothed in flesh. It is the Body of Christ, then, which here says: *And thou shalt nourish me.*

10. [V. 5] *Thou wilt bring me out of this trap which they have hidden for me.* The Passion now appears: *Thou wilt bring me out of this trap which they have hidden for me.* Nor is the allusion to suffering solely to that which our Lord Jesus Christ underwent: the devil has set his trap for all time. Woe to the man who falls into that trap! Everyone, nevertheless, who fails to put his trust in God does fall into it, everyone who does not cry: *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded; and in thy justice rescue me and deliver me.* The enemy's trap has been set and ready laid. He has baited it with error and intimidation: error to allure, intimidation to unman and to prevail. You must bar the entrance of desire against error, you must bar the entrance of fear against intimidation, and you shall escape the trap. As for the conduct of such struggles, your Captain Himself who even deigned to undergo temptation for your sake has set you the example in His own behavior. He was first of all tempted with evil allurements; the gateway of desire was tested, when the devil tempted Him saying: *Command that these stones be made bread. Adore me and I will give thee these kingdoms. Cast thyself down, for it is written: "That He hath given His angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone."*<sup>42</sup> All this seduction makes trial of the appetite of desire. When, however, the devil found the door of desire fast shut in Him who was being tempted

on our account, he turned his energies to trying the door of fear and prepared the plan of His passion. Accordingly the Evangelist says: *And the temptation being ended, the devil departed from Him for a time.*<sup>43</sup> Why for a time? As much as to say he was to return and put the door of fear to the proof, since he had found the door of desire barred. It is therefore the whole Body of Christ which is being subjected to temptation until the end of the world. My brethren, when evil of any sort was decreed against the early Christians, at the very moment this Body was thrust through, the whole Body received the thrust. Hence the Psalm declared: *As a heap of sand I was shaken that I might fall; but the Lord supported me.*<sup>44</sup> And when those persecutions, which were hurled at the whole Body to overthrow it, had run their course, then trial arose in its separate parts. The Body of Christ is constantly being assailed; if one part of the Church<sup>45</sup> is not undergoing persecution, then another is. If it is not enduring violence from the head of the state, then it is enduring violence from a wicked populace. What great devastation is wrought by the common people! How much harm has been dealt to the Church by bad Christians, by those men who were enclosed in the net, who were so increased in number that the ships were overloaded during that catch our Lord took before His passion?<sup>46</sup> There is never any lack, indeed, of the pressure of trial. Let no man say to himself: "This is not a time of trial." Whoever tells himself this, is promising himself a quiet time; the man who promises himself a quiet time is taken off his guard. Therefore let the whole Body of Christ cry out: *Thou wilt bring me out of this trap which they have hidden for me*, because our Head has already been delivered from the trap laid for Him by those men who were told just now



in the Gospel that they would say: *This is the heir, come let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.* And when questioned, they pronounced their own doom: *What will that master of the house do to the wicked husbandmen? He will bring those evil men to an evil end, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen. What, and have you never read this: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner"?*<sup>47</sup> Now the meaning of *the builders rejected* is expressed in the phrase: *They cast him forth out of the vineyard and killed him.* I have said, then, that He has been delivered. Our Head is above, is free. Let us cleave to Him by love, that hereafter we may be the more closely united to Him by immortality, and let us all proclaim: *Thou wilt bring me out of this trap which they have hidden for me; for thou art my protector.*

11. Let us listen to our Lord's voice, to His cry on the cross: [V. 6] *Into thy hands I commend my spirit.* Surely when we recognize that these words of His in the Gospel are drawn from this Psalm, we can have no doubt that He Himself was here speaking. You have this statement in the Gospel, that He said:<sup>48</sup> *Into thy hands I commend my spirit; and bowing His head He gave up the ghost.*<sup>49</sup> It was not without reason that He made the words of this Psalm His very own; He was warning you that He Himself had spoken therein. Look for our Lord here; remember how He wished you to find Him in that other Psalm entitled: *For the morning protection. They have dug my hands and feet, they have numbered all my bones. And they have looked and stared upon me. They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they cast lots.*<sup>50</sup> In order to make it clear to you that this prophecy reached fulfilment in Himself, He placed in His own

mouth the opening words of the same Psalm: *O God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*<sup>51</sup> But it was the voice of His Body which He was transferring to His own person; at no time did the Father ever forsake His only Son. *Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth:* keeping thy pledge, defrauding not in thy solemn assurance, O God of truth.

12. [V. 7] *Thou hast hated them that regard lying vanities to no purpose.*<sup>52</sup> Who sets store by lying vanities? He who dies from fear of death, for by fearing to die he lies, and the man who so lied in order to live dies before his appointed time. So you would lie to avoid death? Why, you do both: you lie and you die. While you shirk the one death which you can postpone but not evade, you meet with two: you die first in your soul, afterwards in your body. Why, except through attachment to lying vanities? Because the time that is a-flying tastes sweet to you, because the fleeting seasons charm you. You can retain nothing of them and yet they make a slave of you. *Thou hast hated them that regard lying vanities to no purpose. But I, who set no store by lying vanities, have hoped in the Lord.* You trust in riches, you are worshiping lying vanities; you trust in dignities, in some lofty position of human influence, you are worshiping lying vanities; you trust in some powerful friend, you are worshiping lying vanities. When you put your trust in all these, either you depart this life and leave them all behind, or else during your lifetime they all come to nothing and your hopes are dashed to the ground. It is this lying vanity which Isaias calls to mind in the words: *All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass; the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth; but the word of the Lord endureth forever.*<sup>53</sup> But I am not as those who

trust in lying vanities and who worship lying vanities; I have hoped in the Lord, who is not a lying vanity.

13. [V. 8] *I will be glad and delight in thy mercy: not in any justice of my own. Because thou hast regarded my humility, thou hast saved my soul out of necessities;<sup>54</sup> and thou hast not shut me up in the hands of the enemy.*

What are the necessities from which we wish our soul to be saved? Who can count them? Who can rightly assess them? Who can tell us precisely all that are to be shunned and avoided? First, it is a cruel necessity to mortal man to be ignorant of a neighbor's heart; oftentimes to think ill of a faithful friend, oftentimes to think well of a faithless one. O grievous necessity! And what can you do to learn the secrets of hearts? What sight can you apply, O weak and pitiable mortality? What can you do towards seeing today into your brother's heart? There is nothing you can do.

There is a further necessity even more deplorable. You cannot so much as foresee your own heart's behavior tomorrow. What am I to say of the necessities of mortal life itself? To die is a necessity; no man would choose it. No man makes choice of the inevitable. No man chooses what will happen whether he likes it or not. Grim necessity, to be averse to what is unavoidable! Now were it possible, we should undoubtedly wish not to die; we should wish to be made like the angels, but by some kind of transformation, not by death; as the Apostle expresses it: *We have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven. For in this we groan desiring to be clothed upon with our habitation that is from heaven. Yet so that we be found clothed and not naked. For we also who are in this habitation do groan, being burdened, because we would not be unclothed, but clothed upon,*

*that that which is mortal may be swallowed up by life.*<sup>55</sup> We desire to reach the kingdom of God but not by death; yet necessity tells you: This way shall you travel. Do you hesitate to travel this way, O mortal man, when it was this way God traveled to you?

And again, what of the necessities of mastering deeply ingrained lusts and evil habits formed from time immemorial? To master habit means a stern fight, as you have experienced. You realize how sinful your deeds are, how hateful, how wretched; and yet you go on doing them: you did them yesterday, you will do the same today. If they disquiet you so much even as I speak of them, how much will they disquiet you when you examine into them? Yet in spite of all, you will act likewise tomorrow. What seizes hold of you? Who drags you along captive? Is it that law in your members fighting against the law in your mind? Then cry aloud: *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord.*<sup>56</sup> Then what I have just been saying will be accomplished in you: *But I have hoped in the Lord; I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy; because thou hast regarded my humility, thou hast saved my soul out of necessities.* For how has your soul been freed from these necessities except that God has regarded your humility? If you had not been first humbled, He who was to set you free from necessities would not have heard your prayer. He humbled himself who cried: *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* But they are far from humble, who not knowing the justice of God, and seeking to establish their own, have not submitted themselves to the justice of God.<sup>57</sup>

14. [V. 9] *And thou hast not shut me up in the hands*



of *the enemy*. Not into the hands of your neighbor, not of your partner, not of the comrade-in-arms whom you injured or that fellow citizen of yours whom you perhaps wronged: all these are the kind of men for whom we must pray. We have another enemy, the devil, the old serpent. All of us at death, if we die a good death, are set free from his hands. But any who die an evil death, dying in their sins, are shut up in his hands to be damned forever with him at the last day. Our Lord God sets us free, therefore, from the hands of our enemy who would take us captive through our passions.<sup>58</sup> Now when our passions are strong and gain the upper hand, they are termed necessities. When, however, God sets our soul free from our necessities, what can the enemy catch hold of in us so as to shut us up in his hands?

15. *Thou hast set my feet in a spacious place*. Undoubtedly the way is strait:<sup>59</sup> to the labourer, strait; to the lover, broad. The very way which is strait becomes broad. *In a spacious place*, he says, *thou hast set my feet*; for fear that, being cramped for room, one foot should impede the other, and in the collision throw me to the ground. What is the meaning, then, of *Thou hast set my feet in a spacious place*? In plain speech, thou hast made the works of justice which once I found difficult easy to me. That is the sense of *Thou hast set my feet in a spacious place*.

16. [V. 10, 11] *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am afflicted, my eye is troubled with wrath, my soul and my belly. For my life is wasted with grief, and my years in sighs*. Let this much suffice for the present, dearest brethren. With the help of our Lord we hope to complete the remainder later, so as to reach the end of the Psalm before we take our leave of you.

## THIRD DISCOURSE ON PSALM 30

1. Let us turn our attention to the remainder of the Psalm and recognize our own selves in the prophet's words. For if we scrutinize ourselves in the day of trial, we shall rejoice in the day of recompense. I explained to you, dearest brethren, when interpreting the opening verses of this Psalm, that Christ is speaking. Nor did I fail to say how Christ must be understood, the whole Christ, Head and Body. I supported this with proofs from Scripture which seemed to me sufficiently relevant and clear, so that there could be no doubt whatsoever that Christ subsists in Head and Body, bridegroom and bride, Son of God and the Church—Son of God made Son of Man for our sake to make the sons of men sons of God, so that those who are acknowledged in the prophets to be two in one voice should thus become two in one flesh in a great mystery. The Psalmist has expressed his thanksgiving in the previous words: *Thou hast regarded my humility, thou hast saved my soul out of necessities, and thou hast not shut me up in the hands of the enemy. Thou hast set my feet in a spacious place.* It is the thanksgiving of mankind set free from affliction, of the members of Christ set free from oppression and pitfalls. Yet on the other hand he cries: *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am afflicted.* Affliction undoubtedly implies distress. Why then *Thou hast set my feet in a spacious place?* If he is still beset with difficulties, how are his feet in a spacious place? Or is it possibly that there is but one voice because there is but one Body, yet some members enjoy ample space while others are narrowly confined; that is, some find it easy to practise works of justice, others are toiling

in anguish? For if different members were not meeting some with one condition, some with another, the Apostle would not say: *If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it.*<sup>1</sup> In some places,<sup>2</sup> for instance, the Church enjoys peace; in other places she endures affliction: for such as enjoy peace, the feet are set in spacious places, while they are cramped in those under affliction; but the sorrow of the latter saddens the former, and the peace of the one consoles the other. So truly, therefore, is it one Body that there should be no division; nothing makes division except dissension.<sup>3</sup> Charity on the contrary produces coherence, coherence achieves unity, unity preserves charity, charity attains to glory. Let the Body say, then, in the person of some of its members: *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am afflicted, my eye is troubled with wrath, my soul and my belly.*

2. What is the cause of this affliction, we ask, for just now the speaker seemed to congratulate himself upon his freedom, upon a righteousness which God had generously lavished on him, and upon the broad space which an increase of charity had thus cleared for his feet? Why then this affliction, if not indeed for the reason of which our Lord speaks: *Because iniquity shall abound, the charity of many shall grow cold?*<sup>4</sup> For whereas at first the Church was distinguished by a mere handful of holy men, once the fishing nets were so to say cast forth, the Church increased and enclosed the great multitude foretold in the prophecy: *I have declared and I have spoken: they are multiplied above number.*<sup>5</sup> They were even to overload the ships and break the nets, as is recorded of that first haul before our Lord's passion.<sup>6</sup> It is from these multitudes the crowds are drawn who at Easter so cram the churches

that the narrowness of the walls will not admit their numbers. How can the speaker help feeling afflicted for this multitude, when he sees those very men filling the theaters and circuses who but now filled the churches, the very men engaged in sin who but now engaged in God's praises, the very men blaspheming God whose lips answered "Amen" to God? But he must remain steadfast, he must endure, he must not feel disheartened even at the vast numbers of the wicked, since the grain of wheat in the mass of chaff is not lost; but the winnowing over, it is gathered at last into the barn, there to abide in the company of the saints, undisturbed by any clouds of dust. So he must hold fast, for when our Lord had said: *Because iniquity shall abound, the charity of many shall grow cold*, for fear our feet should slip and flounder because of this prediction of iniquity abounding, He straightway added, in order to uplift, console and strengthen the faithful: *He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.*<sup>8</sup>

3. And so listen to the Psalmist, living this life, it seems to me, of great tribulation. When he is plunged in affliction and you might suppose he ought to grieve (for affliction finds a suitable fellow in grief), he declares he is angry in affliction, and cries: *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am afflicted, my eye is troubled with wrath*. If afflicted, why angry? The man is angered at the sins of others. Who would not be angered, seeing men acknowledging God with their lips and in their lives denying Him? Who would not be angered, seeing men renouncing the world in word and not in work? Who would not be angered, seeing brother plot against brother, breaking faith with the kiss they imprint in God's sacraments? And who can number all the things angering Christ's Body, deriving as it does its inward life from Christ's Spirit, and



sighing like the grain amid the chaff? For those who sigh thus, who are thus angered, scarcely attract notice, even as the grain is hardly noticed when the floor is being threshed. A man ignorant of the number of ears garnered imagines the whole to be chaff; and yet from what is thought to be nothing but chaff, a great heap will be cleansed. Among these men who sigh unnoticed is he who in anger has said elsewhere: *The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.*<sup>9</sup> And again at sight of the many committing sins: *Weariness hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law.*<sup>10</sup> And also in another place: *I beheld the foolish and I pined away.*<sup>11</sup>

4. This anger, however, must be feared; otherwise it may be so great as to turn to hatred. Anger is not yet hatred: though you may feel angry with your son, you do not hate your child; you are reserving the inheritance for him who tastes your wrath; but you are simply angry for fear that by ill living<sup>12</sup> and loose habits he squander what you have saved. Anger therefore is not yet hatred; as yet, we do not hate those with whom we are angry, but if the said anger persists and is not quickly rooted up, it grows into hatred. It is in order to drive out freshly-kindled wrath before it turns to hatred that Scripture teaches us: *Let not the sun go down upon your anger.*<sup>13</sup> Even so, you sometimes come across a brother nursing hatred within himself and reproving another who is angry. There is hatred in the one and he blames anger in the other; he himself has a beam in his own eye and he reproves the mote in his brother's eye.<sup>14</sup> But unless this mote, this tiny growing thing, is promptly plucked out, it will become a beam. Therefore the Psalmist does not say: My eye is "blinded" with wrath, but *troubled*; for if it be blinded, then it is hatred, not anger. Now notice how it is

blinded. This is what John asserts: *He that hateth his brother is in darkness even until now.*<sup>15</sup> Hence before the eye lapses into darkness, it is troubled with wrath; but we must take care that the wrath does not degenerate into hatred and so blind the eye. Thus the Psalmist says: *My eye is troubled with wrath, my soul and my belly*—that is to say, my inmost self is troubled. “Belly” signifies the inmost recesses. Indeed one may sometimes be angry with the wicked and perverse, with those who stray from the right path and live evil lives, yet not be allowed to cry out. When we are angry and unable to cry out, our innermost self is troubled. At times the evil is so great that there is no possible remedy.

5. *For my life is wasted with grief, and my years in sighs. My life is wasted*, he declares, *with grief*. The Apostle says: *Now we live, if you stand in the Lord.*<sup>16</sup> Those who have been made perfect through the Gospel and the grace of God live here only for the sake of others; for their life in this world is no longer needful to them. But since their ministry is necessary to others, they experience what the same Apostle speaks of: *Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ: a thing by far the better; but to abide still in the flesh is needful for you.*<sup>17</sup> When, however, a man sees that men do not profit from his ministry, from his labors, from his preaching, the man’s life grows weak in want. Truly wretched are such want and hunger, because those whom we gain for the Lord, the Church in a certain way consumes. What is the meaning of “consumes”? Conveys into its own body; for whatever we eat, we transfer into our own body. This the Church does in regard to the saints: she hungers for those she desires to gain, and those she has in any way gained, she in a certain way consumes. Peter played this part,

when a vessel was let down from heaven before him, full of all kinds of four-footed beasts, creeping things and fowls of the air, by which kinds of things are signified all peoples. The Lord was thus foretelling the Church, which was to make all peoples her food and convert them into her own body; thus He said to Peter, *Kill and eat*.<sup>18</sup> O Church (that is, Peter, for upon this rock will I build my Church<sup>19</sup>), *kill and eat*; first kill, and then eat; destroy their being and build up your own. So when the Gospel is preached, and he who preaches sees that men do not profit, why should he not cry: *For my life is wasted with grief, and my years in sighs. My strength is weakened through poverty and my bones are disturbed?* These years of ours spent here are in sighs. Why? Because iniquity has abounded, the charity of many has grown cold. They pass in sighs, not in clear tones: when the Church sees many going astray, she inwardly suppresses her groans, so as to say to God: *My groaning is not hidden from thee*.<sup>20</sup> These words from another Psalm, which agree so well with this one, imply: "Although my groaning is hidden from men, it is not hidden from thee." *My strength is weakened through poverty and my bones are disturbed*. We have already discussed this poverty. The bones may symbolize the strong ones of the Church, who even if they are unmoved by the persecution of those without, are by no means unmoved by the iniquities of the brethren within.

6. [V. 12] *I am become a reproach among all my enemies, and very much to my neighbors, and a fear to my acquaintance. I am become a reproach among all my enemies*. Who are the Church's enemies? Pagans, Jews? Bad Christians lead lives worse than any of them. Would you like to see how much worse lives bad Christians lead

than any of them? The prophet Ezechiel refers to them, comparing them to useless vine branches.<sup>21</sup> Supposing pagans are forest trees, outside the Church, at least something can be made of them; just as workable kinds of wood provide timber fit for the craftsman, and if to begin with it is knotty and crooked and covered with bark, what is objectionable can be hewn and smoothed away, and it may be turned into some piece of workmanship for man's use. But from severed vine twigs carpenters can make nothing; only the fire awaits them. Mark well, brethren. Whereas the vine branch growing on the vine is invariably held in higher esteem than the forest tree, because the vine branch yields fruit whereas the tree yonder does not; yet if the forest tree is compared with a branch cut off from the vine, the former is considered the better of the two, because a craftsman can make something from it, whereas nobody wants the other except to feed a fire. Hence, confronted with the multitude of those who lead evil lives in the Church, *Among all my enemies*, the Psalmist cries, *I am become a reproach*. The wicked, he says, lead worse lives in spite of my sacraments than those who have never approached them. Why should I not speak out openly in Latin, at least when explaining a Psalm? Even if perhaps we dare not speak out at other times, let the demands of the interpretation, at any rate, sanction the administering of a rebuke. *Among all my enemies*, he says, *I am become a reproach*. It is of these that the Apostle Peter says: *Their latter state is become unto them worse than the former; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them.*<sup>22</sup> When he says, *It had been better for them not to have known the way of justice*, did he not declare that the



enemies, ranged without, are better than the evil livers within who oppress and suffocate the Church? *It had been better*, he says, *for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them.* Just notice what a horrible comparison he uses: *For that of the true proverb has happened to them: "The dog is returned to his vomit."* Since churches are full of such folk, have not the few there, or rather the Church herself by the voice of the few, reason to exclaim: *I am become a reproach among all my enemies, and very much to my neighbors, and a fear to my acquaintance?* I am covered with shame in the eyes of my neighbors, or those who once drew near to embrace the faith: that is, my neighbors are very much repelled by the evil lives of wicked and false Christians. How many do you imagine, my brethren, would wish to be Christians but are deterred by the wicked ways of Christians? They are neighbors who would have drawn near, but found us a stumbling block.

7. *I am become a fear to my acquaintance.* Why such fear? *I am become a fear*, he says, *to my acquaintance.* What is there so much to fear, as when a man sees many people leading evil lives, and those of whom he had hoped better things found out in many misdeeds? He is afraid that all he supposed good may be just the same, and almost all the good fall under suspicion of being evil. What kind of man is he? How has he come to grief? How has he been found out in this infamy, in that crime, in the other detestable deed? Do you think they are not all alike? That is the meaning of *fear to my acquaintance*, namely, that often we may fall under a cloud with those very people who know us. And unless your own integrity (supposing it to be a fact) reassures you, you do not believe in an-



other's. A good conscience in any degree comforts a man, so that the man who lives a good life can say to himself: "O you who are just now fearing all may be alike, are you like that?" Conscience replies: "I am not." Well then, if you are not like that, are you the only one? Beware that this pride be not worse than that wickedness. Far be it from you to say you are the only one. For Elias on one occasion, being wearied with the multitude of the ungodly, said: *They have slain thy prophets, they have dug down thy altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the divine answer to him? I have left me seven thousand men, that have not bowed their knees to Baal.*<sup>23</sup> Therefore, brethren, in the midst of these scandals there is but one remedy: do not think evil of your brother. Humbly be what you would have him be, and you will not suppose him to be what you are not.<sup>24</sup> But all the same there must be an uncertainty, a fear, with acquaintances, even with tried friends.

8. [V. 13] *They that saw me fled without from me.*<sup>25</sup> It would have been pardonable if they who did not see me had fled away from me; yet even those who did see me fled away from me. But if those who did not see me fled away from me (we cannot say fled away, because they were not within: for if they had been within, they would have seen me, they would have recognized the Body of Christ, they would have recognized the members of Christ, they would have recognized the unity of Christ), yet what is more lamentable, in fact altogether intolerable, is that many who did see me fled from me; that is, those who knew what the Church is, went out from the Church and instituted heresies and schisms against her. Today, for instance, you find a man born in the Donatist sect; he does not know what the Church

is, he holds fast to that in which he was born: you will not pluck out of him the way of living he imbibed with his nurse's milk. But take another man, one who converses daily in the Scriptures, who studies and preaches: pray, does he not see there *Ask of me, and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession?*<sup>26</sup> Does he not see there *All the ends of the earth shall remember and shall be converted to the Lord, and all the lands of the Gentiles shall adore in his sight?*<sup>27</sup> If you see there the unity of the whole earth, why do you flee away, so as not only to suffer blindness yourself but actually to make others blind too? *They that saw me*, that is, those who knew what the Church is, who beheld her in the Scriptures, "fled without from me." Do you think, my brethren, that all those who have originated heresies in one place and another did not know from the divine Scriptures that the Church is always foretold as spread abroad throughout the whole earth? In truth I tell you, beloved brethren; undoubtedly we are all Christians, or at any rate we are all called Christians,<sup>28</sup> and all sealed with the sign of Christ; and in fact the prophets spoke less plainly about Christ than about the Church. This I think was because they saw by the Spirit that men would set up factions against the Church. About Christ Himself they would not wage such bitter strife, but about the Church they would stir up mighty controversies. Therefore that which was to give rise to more serious contentions was more clearly predicted and more openly prophesied, that this evidence might be used to convict those who saw and yet fled away.

9. I will mention one example. Abraham was our father, not by our physical descent but by our imitation of his

faith. Righteous and pleasing to God as he was, through faith he was given Isaac, the son promised to him, born of Sara his barren wife, in his old age.<sup>29</sup> He was commanded to offer up to God that very son, and he neither doubted nor questioned, neither disputed God's command nor considered evil what the Supreme Good could order. He led forth his son for immolation, laid upon him the wood for the sacrifice, came to the appointed place, stretched forth his hand to strike him, lowered it at God's prohibition even as he had raised it at His command.<sup>30</sup> He who had obeyed in striking, obeyed in sparing: obedient in all things, timid in nothing. But in order that the sacrifice might be completed, and that he might not depart without a blood offering, a ram appeared caught by its horns in a thicket; Abraham immolated it, and the sacrifice was consummated. What is the underlying meaning? The story is a figure of Christ shrouded in mystery. So we are discussing it in order to throw light on Him, we are studying it in order to see Him, so that what is concealed may be revealed. Isaac is the one beloved son typifying the Son of God, bearing the wood for himself, just as Christ bore His cross. Lastly the ram itself was a type of Christ. For what is being caught by the horns except, after a fashion, being crucified? This figure denotes Christ. But the Church must be predicted; once the Head has been foretold, the Body must be foretold also. The Spirit of God, or rather God Himself, began to foretell the Church to Abraham and dropped the imagery. While predicting Christ in figures, he predicted the Church openly; for He said to Abraham, *Because thou hast obeyed my voice and hast not spared thy beloved only-begotten son for my sake, blessing I will bless thee, and increasing I will increase thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand of*

*the sea, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*<sup>31</sup> And almost everywhere Christ has been foretold by the prophets under the veil of symbol, but the Church openly: so that those could see her who were to oppose her, and thus that wickedness which the Psalm foretold, *They that saw me fled without from me*, might reach its fulfilment in them. *They went out from us, but they were not of us*,<sup>32</sup> says the Apostle John of these apostates.

10. *I am forgotten, as one dead from the heart.* I am forgotten, I have passed into oblivion, those who saw me have forgotten me, as entirely forgotten me as though I had perished out of their very minds. *I am forgotten as one dead from the heart: I am become as a vessel that is destroyed.* What is the meaning of *I am become as a vessel that is destroyed*? The man toiled, and nobody was any the better for it; he beholds himself as a vessel, doing nobody any good, and compares himself to a vessel that is destroyed.

11. [V. 14] *For I have heard the blame of many that dwell round about.* Many dwell round about me and blame me every day. How they curse bad Christians, and those foul speeches extend to all Christians in general. For if anybody curses or censures Christians, does he say: "Look what those Christians who are not good do"? No, he says: "Look what Christians do!" He does not sort us out or make distinctions. This is the language of those who dwell round about, that is, who walk round but do not find their way in. Why do they walk round and yet not enter? Because they love the whirling wheel of time: they do not penetrate to the truth because they do not love eternity;<sup>33</sup> they are enslaved to temporal affairs as though bound on a wheel. The Psalmist says of them elsewhere: *Make their princes like a wheel*,<sup>34</sup> and in an-



other place:<sup>35</sup> *The wicked walk round about. While they assembled together against me, they consulted to take away my life.* What is the meaning of *They consulted to take away my life*? So that I should concur in their wicked deeds. For those who revile and do not enter, it is not enough not to enter; they would drive out others by their railings. If they have driven you out of the Church, they have captured your living soul, in other words, they have become possessed of your consent; and you will find yourself outside, not in your own home.

12. But as for me, in the midst of these reproaches, these scandals, these evils, these enticements, amid iniquities without and contradictions within, watching and searching for righteous men and finding no example to follow, how did I behave? What course of action did I adopt? [V. 15] *But I have put my trust in thee, O Lord.* Nothing could be more wholesome, nothing more safe. You were aiming at copying somebody, but you found he was no good: have done with this imitation! You looked for another model, but something, I know not what, displeased you; you looked for a third and he too failed to satisfy you.<sup>36</sup> Are you too going to perish because one or another did not come up to your expectations? Give over trusting in man, for cursed is every one who puts his trust in man.<sup>37</sup> If you still fix your eyes on man, and strive to imitate him and depend upon him, you still wish to be fed with milk; and you become a nurseling,<sup>38</sup> as children are called who remain overlong at the breast; and this is not becoming. To live on man in this way is the same as to be fed on milk, to want one's food transmitted through the flesh. Be capable of sitting at table, of taking the food the other took, or possibly has never taken. Perhaps, indeed, for your profit, you came upon an evil



person whom you thought good, so that you found bitterness as it were in the breast that fed you, and that contact repelled you and so induced you to seek stronger food. Nurses deal thus with nurselings, rubbing some bitter substance on their nipples; disgusted with its touch the little ones start back from the breast and crave for solid food.

Therefore let him say: *But I have put my trust in thee, O Lord, I said: Thou art my God.* Thou art my God: away with Donatus, away with Caecilian;<sup>39</sup> neither the one nor the other is my God. I do not march under any man's name, I hold fast to the name of Christ. I have heard Paul himself saying: *Was Paul then crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*<sup>40</sup> I should be lost were I of Paul's faction; how am I to escape perishing, supposing I belong to Donatus's faction? In a word, away with men's names, men's accusations, men's fabrications. *In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust. I said: Thou art my God.* Not any human being but thou art my God. One wanes, another waxes; my God neither wanes nor waxes: the Perfect cannot grow more perfect, nor can the Eternal fall away.<sup>41</sup> *I said to the Lord: Thou art my God.*

13. [V. 16] *My lots are in thy hands:* not in men's hands, but in thy hands. What are these lots? Why lots? When we hear of lots, we are not to look for fortune-tellers. A lot is not something evil, but it is something showing the will of God when man is uncertain. For the apostles cast lots when Judas, who had betrayed our Lord, perished, and as it was written concerning him, *went to his own place.*<sup>42</sup> they began to inquire who should be appointed to replace him. Two were chosen by human judgment, and of those two one was singled out by the

divine judgment: God was consulted about the two, as to which of them He wished, *and the lot fell upon Matthias*.<sup>43</sup> What is the meaning, then, of *My lots are in thy hands*? So far as I can judge, he termed “lots” the grace by which we are saved. Why does he call the grace of God by the name of “lot”? Because in a lot there is not choice but the will of God. When some one says: “He does this, he does not do that,” he is taking into account the man’s merits; and where merits are taken into account there is choice, not “lot.” But when God found no deserts on our part, He saved us by the lot of His will, because it was His will, not because we were worthy of it. That is the meaning of “lot.” When that tunic of our Lord’s, woven from the top,<sup>44</sup> which stands for the everlastingness of His love, could not be divided by His persecutors, rightly were lots cast for it: they to whom it fell typified those whom we see attaining to the lot of the saints. *By grace you are saved through faith*, says Paul the Apostle. *By grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves*—recognize here the “lot”—*and that not of yourselves; for it is the gift of God. Not of works*, as if you yourselves had done some good so as to be worthy of attaining to it, *not of works, that no man may glory; for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works*.<sup>45</sup> This lot, so to speak, is the hidden will of God; the lot is cast upon the human race, a lot proceeding from the hidden will of God, with whom is no injustice:<sup>46</sup> for He is not an acceptor of persons, but His hidden justice is your lot.

14. Redouble your attention, dearly beloved, and notice how the Apostle Peter establishes this very point. When Simon the magician, baptized by Philip, became his close companion, believing in the divine miracles wrought

before his eyes, the apostles came to Samaria, where the magician himself also had believed and was baptized; they laid their hands upon the baptized, who received the Holy Ghost and began to speak with tongues. Simon was seized with astonishment and wonder at so great a divine miracle that by the imposition of men's hands the Holy Ghost should come down and fill men; he desired that he too might have, not this grace but this power, not what would set him free but what would exalt him. Absorbed by this longing, his heart filled with pride, diabolical impiety and a highmindedness which richly deserved a fall,<sup>47</sup> he said to the apostles: "How much money will you take from me, that men on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Ghost?" He who was seeking worldly things, and dwelling beyond the pale, thought he could purchase the gift of God for money. He who thought he could provide himself with the Holy Ghost at a price, likewise supposed the apostles were greedy of gain, just as he himself was impious and full of pride. Forthwith Peter replied: *Keep thy money to thyself to perish with thee, because thou hast thought the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast no lot nor part in this faith.*<sup>48</sup> That is, you have no share in this grace, which all receive gratis, because you think you can buy for money what is freely given. For that reason what is given gratis is called a lot: *Thou hast no lot nor part in this faith.* I have dwelt at length on all this in case we should be alarmed because he says: *My lots are in thy hands.* What are these lots? The Church's inheritance. How far does the Church's inheritance extend? What are its boundaries? Even to the uttermost limits: *I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession.*<sup>49</sup> Therefore no one need promise me some cut-off slice or

other: O my God, *My lots are in thy hands*. Let this be enough for you, dearly beloved, for the time being. In our Lord's name and with His assistance we shall deal with the remainder tomorrow.

#### FOURTH DISCOURSE ON PSALM 30

I have already delivered two sermons upon this Psalm. There still remains a little more than a third of the Psalm to cover and I realize that I must finish the task today, so I beg you, beloved brethren, not to mind if I do not dwell on verses that are obvious, in order that I may linger over such as call for explanation. For many spring at once to the minds of the faithful; some require a slight interpretation; but there are others, not very many indeed, which tax all one's energies to comprehend.<sup>1</sup> To proportion the time according to your strength and mine, notice how obvious in meaning certain portions are; let us grant that, without further ado, and unite in praising God in their words. If the Psalm prays, do you too pray; if it laments, do you lament; if it rejoices, rejoice with it; if it hopes, express your hope too; if it fears, do you also fear; for all things written herein serve to mirror ourselves.

2. [V. 16] *Deliver me out of the hands of my enemies and from them that persecute me*. Let us repeat it, let every single man repeat it of his own enemies. It is clearly a good thing and we ought to pray that God should deliver us out of the hands of our enemies. But we must define the enemies for whom or against whom prayer is to be offered. Human enemies, whoever they are, must not be held in hatred, or else when one bad man hates the other whom he has to endure, there will be two bad men. Let the good man love even the bad man who makes him



suffer, so that at any rate he will remain alone in his evil-doing. The enemies against whom we must pray are the devil and his angels. They grudge us the kingdom of heaven; they would not have us ascend to the place from which they have been thrust down. We must pray that our soul may be delivered from their hands. Thus, for instance, the human beings they set to work against us become their tools. Accordingly the Apostle Paul, warning us how wary we should be of these enemies, tells God's servants who are enduring tribulations, especially from the discord, wickedness and hostility of men: *Your wrestling is not against flesh and blood*, that is, not against human beings, *but against principalities and powers and the rulers of the world.*<sup>2</sup> What world? The heavens and the earth? God forbid. There is no ruler of this universe but its Creator. Whom, then, does he style the world? The lovers of the world. He goes on to explain: When I speak of the world, I mean *of this darkness*. What darkness if not that of the unbelieving and profane? For when the profane and unbelieving were converted into religious believers the same Apostle addresses them thus: *For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord.*<sup>3</sup> It is *against the spirits of wickedness in the high places*,<sup>4</sup> he says, it is against the devil and his angels that you wage war. You cannot see your foes, yet you are victorious. *Deliver me out of the hands of my enemies and from them that persecute me.*

3. [V. 17] *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; save me in thy mercy.* I was saying before, if those of you, dearest brethren, who were present at yesterday's discourse remember, that the greatest persecutors of the Church are those Christians who refuse to live upright lives. For it is through these men that the Church is given



a bad name, and from these men that she encounters hostility. When they are reprov'd, when they are not allowed to continue their evil lives, when they are even so much as spoken to, they foster evil thoughts in their hearts and watch their chance to attack openly. Among them we find the Psalmist sighing, or rather we ourselves too, if we wish; for they are in the majority and amid such a vast crowd the good are hardly discernible, like the grains of wheat on the threshing floor which nevertheless, when threshed out, are to fill the Lord's barn.<sup>5</sup> It is then among this company that the Psalmist says with a sigh: *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant*. For a certain confusion of thought results, when all are styled Christians, both the men of upright, and the men of base lives, when all are signed with the same sign, all approach the same altar, all are cleansed in the same baptism, all recite the same Lord's Prayer, all assist at the celebration of the same mysteries. How can one distinguish between those who sigh and those who cause the sighs unless God makes His face shine upon His servant? Then what is the meaning of *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant*? Let it be clearly seen that I belong to thee, and let not the unworthy Christian make the same claim; otherwise my prayer to thee in another Psalm might prove unfounded: *Judge me, O God, and distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy*.<sup>6</sup> Where the Psalmist says in the one: *Distinguish my cause*, he says in the other: *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant*. Yet for fear that he should grow inflated with pride and appear as if vindicated by some merit of his own, he adds the words: *Save me in thy mercy*; not because of my own justice, that is to say, not because of any merit of mine, but *in thy mercy*; not because I am worthy, but because thou art merciful. Hear

me, not after the inflexible fashion of the law courts, but according to thy most merciful clemency. *Save me in thy mercy.*

4. [V. 18] *Let me not be confounded, O Lord, for I have called upon thee.* Powerful is his plea. *Let me not be confounded, for I have called upon thee.* Wouldst thou have him confounded who has called upon thee? Wouldst thou have it said: Where is He in whom he confidently trusted? Yet who, even among the wicked themselves, does not call upon God? Unless, therefore, he had some special reason common only to few for saying *I have called upon thee*, he could not possibly dare to demand so great a reward as a result of this petition. For God could make the mental reply, so to speak: "Why do you ask me not to be confounded? Wherefore? Because you have called upon me? Do not men call upon me daily that they may, for instance, satisfy the guilty love their hearts are set on? Do not men call upon me daily that those from whom they have expectations may die? Do not men call upon me daily to bring the piece of trickery they are planning to a successful conclusion?" What, then, is your reason for claiming a reward so mighty that you say: *Let me not be confounded, for I have called upon thee?*"

Granted those men call aloud, still they do not call upon thee. You call upon God when you call God within. For to call upon Him means to call Him unto yourself, to invite Him, as it were, into the dwelling of your own heart. Yet you would not dare to invite so great a Householder unless you knew how to prepare Him an abode. For suppose God should say to you: "Lo, you have called upon me, I am here, to what am I coming? Am I to endure such filth as stains your conscience? If you had invited my servant into your house, would you not have taken

the trouble to clean it first? You call me into your heart and it is filled with rapine. The place into which God is called is full of blasphemies, full of impurities, full of frauds, full of evil desires, and you call me in!" What, I ask you, does the Psalm say elsewhere of such men? *They have not called upon the Lord.*<sup>8</sup> They called, undoubtedly, yet they did not call upon Him.<sup>9</sup> I am treating it briefly, since the question has arisen: How can a man base such a huge claim on the single ground of having said: *for I have called upon thee?* The problems crops up when we see God invoked by so many evil men; and we cannot ignore it. I put the question in few words to the covetous man: "Do you call upon God? Why do you call upon God?" "That He may afford me gain." "It is gain, then, you are invoking, not God. Because you find this gain that you are bent on is unobtainable from your servant, from your tenant, from your client, from your friend, from your follower, you call upon God, you make God the instrument of your gain. So cheap has God become to you. Do you really desire to call upon God? Call upon Him without asking for anything."<sup>10</sup> Miser, would you count it paltry gain that God Himself should fill you? If God should come to you minus gold and silver, would you have none of Him? Which of the objects that God has made would suffice you, for whom God Himself is not enough?" Reasonable, therefore, is the Psalmist's request: *Let me not be confounded, for I have called upon thee.* Call upon our Lord, brethren, if you would not be put to confusion. The speaker in fact dreads that kind of confusion to which he has alluded earlier in the Psalm: *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded.* Now after having said: *Let me not be confounded, for I have called upon thee,* to specify for us the

confusion he dreads, what does the Psalmist add? *Let the wicked be ashamed and be brought down to hell*, into a confusion beyond all doubt everlasting.

5. [V. 19] *Let deceitful lips be made dumb, which speak iniquity against the just, with pride and contempt.* This just man is Christ. Many lips there are which flagrantly abuse Him with pride and contempt. How with pride and contempt? Because He who came so lowly seemed to the lofty to be contemptible. You do not want Him who welcomed such outrages to be scorned by men who love honors? You do not want Him who laid down His life to be scorned by men who set such immense store by this present life? You do not want Him who was crucified to meet with scorn from those who consider the sentence of the cross a death of ignominy? You do not want Him to be scorned by the opulent, who, Creator of the world though He was, led a life of poverty in the world? Because Christ refused to possess all such things as men value—not that He lacked power to possess them, but that He wished by forgoing them to show that they were to be despised—therefore all who care for those things despise Him. In consequence every servant of His who desires to follow His steps and himself walk in the lowliness in which, as he has learnt, his Lord walked, is despised in Christ as a member of Christ; and when Head and members are despised, the whole Christ Himself is despised, since the whole Just One is formed of Head and Body. Needs must the whole Christ Himself be despised by the proud and wicked, that in them the words *Let deceitful lips be made dumb, which speak iniquity against the just, with pride and contempt* may be fulfilled. When will those lips be struck dumb? In this world? Never. Daily they decry Christians, especially the humble; daily



they blaspheme, daily they rage; they heap up vengeance on the tongues with which they will thirst in hell, where they will long in vain for a drop of water.<sup>11</sup> Not in this present time, then, are their lips to be silenced. But when? When *their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them*,<sup>12</sup> as the Book of Wisdom says: *Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them. Then shall they say: These are they whom we had some time in derision and for a parable of reproach. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints. We fools esteemed their life madness.*<sup>13</sup> Then shall their lips be silenced, which hurled insults against the just, with the pride of contempt. At present they say to us: "Where is your God? To what are you paying homage? What do you see? You live a life of faith and of toil: the toil is a certainty, your expectation is an uncertainty." When our expectation is turned to certainty, then will these deceitful lips be made dumb.

6. Now notice the consequence, after deceitful lips which malign the just with pride and contempt have been silenced. The Psalmist who utters this lament has noticed it; he has contemplated in spirit God's blessings; he has beheld these good things which are seen only in secret, which wicked men cannot see. And he sees, moreover, that they are speaking maliciously against the innocent with pride and scorn, because they have eyes only for the good things of this world, but of the good things of the world to come they have no notion.

In order, however, to set the joys of the life to come before men whom he is entreating to tolerate this present life, not to love it, the Psalmist has added in a burst of feeling: [V. 20] *O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O*



*Lord.* Should the blasphemer ask: "Where is this treasure of sweetness?", I shall reply: "How am I to show you this treasure of sweetness when the fever of sin has made you lose your sense of taste? If you were unacquainted with honey, you could not cry out how good it tasted unless you had sampled it. Your heart does not possess the sense of taste necessary to relish these good things; what can I do for you? How can I show you it?" This is not the type of man to tell: *O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet.*<sup>14</sup> *O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden from them that fear thee. Why hidden from them?* Thou hast stored it up for them, not refused it, so that they alone may attain to it (for it is a good which cannot be common to both just and wicked men alike); thou hast stored it so that they may reach it along the road of fear. As long as they are in a state of fear, they have not as yet reached their goal; but they believe they will do so, and their starting point is fear. Nothing is sweeter than the immortality of wisdom, yet the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.<sup>15</sup> *Which thou hast hidden from them that fear thee.*

7. *Which thou hast wrought for them that hope in thee, in the sight of the sons of men.* Not "thou hast wrought in the sight of the sons of men," but *for them that hope in thee in the sight of the sons of men.* Thou hast communicated thy sweetness, that is to say, to those who hope in thee in the sight of the sons of men. Thus it is our Lord says: *He that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven.*<sup>16</sup> If therefore you hope in the Lord, do it openly in men's sight for fear you should keep this hope of yours hidden in your heart and be afraid to profess it honestly when the fact of being a Christian is cast in your teeth as a

reproach. But who nowadays is taunted with being a Christian? So few non-Christians are left that it is a question rather of their being taunted for not being Christians than of their daring to taunt others for being Christians.<sup>17</sup> Yet I tell you, brethren, just begin, any of you my listeners here, begin to live as a Christian should, and see whether the cry is not raised even by Christians, Christians in name but not in life, not in standards. No one can fully realize it who has not tried it. Pay attention, therefore, weigh my words. Do you want to live as a Christian should? Do you want to follow the footprints of your Lord? You are taunted, you blush with shame, and for very shame you give it up. You have lost the right track. You think you have *believed with the heart unto justice*, but you have lost your bearings: *with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation*.<sup>18</sup> If you want to walk in the way of the Lord, then hope in God even in the sight of men; in other words, do not be ashamed of your hope. As He lives in your heart, so let Him abide on your lips; for Christ had good reason for wishing His sign to be made on our foreheads, the seat of sensibility, so that a Christian should never blush with shame over the reproaches of Christ.<sup>19</sup> If therefore you act thus in the sight of men, if you are not ashamed of it before men's eyes, if in the sight of the sons of men you do not deny Christ either in word or deed, then you may hope it is to you that God will communicate His sweetness.

8. What follows? [V. 21] *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy face*. What sort of abode is this? He did not say: "Thou shalt hide them in heaven," or: "Thou shalt hide them in paradise," nor yet: "Thou shalt hide them in Abraham's bosom." The future abodes of the saints are designated by many titles<sup>20</sup> in Holy Scripture. Everything

should be reckoned worthless which lies outside God. Let Him who protects us during the sojourn of this life be Himself our abode when this life is ended. This same Psalm has already addressed Him thus: *Be thou unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge.* It is in God's face, then, that we shall be hidden. Do you expect to hear me describe the hiding place of God's countenance? Cleanse your heart so that He Himself may enlighten you, that He whom you invoke may take possession of you. Be you His dwelling place and He will be your dwelling place; let Him abide in you and you shall abide in Him. If you welcome Him into your heart during this life, He will welcome you with His face when life is ended. *Thou shalt hide them,* says the Psalmist. Where? *In the secret of thy face.* *From the disturbance of men:* for there is no disturbance when they are hidden there; in the secret of thy face they are not disturbed. Can you imagine a man in this world so happy as he who, when he hears himself taunted by men because he serves Christ, forthwith runs to God in his heart, takes up and exercises his trust in God's sweetness, and enters with conscience as companion into the presence of God from the provocation of men whose reproaches are in his ears? To be sure, he enters in only if he fulfils the conditions of entrance; if, that is to say, that conscience of his is not overladen, if it does not provide him with a cumbersome burden, he enters at the narrow gate. *Thou shalt hide them* therefore *in the secret of thy face from the disturbance of men.* *Thou shalt protect them in thy tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues.* Some day thou wilt hide them in the secret of thy face from the disturbance of men so that thenceforth no human provocation can have any effect upon them. Meanwhile, since they are wanderers in this world and

since those who serve thee are subjected to the reproaches of many tongues, how dost thou act? *Thou shalt protect them in thy tabernacle.* What does the tabernacle signify? The Church of this present life. She is styled a tabernacle for this reason, because so far she is a pilgrim on this earth. For a tabernacle is the tent used by soldiers while encamping on a campaign. Such things are called tabernacles. A tabernacle is no home. Fight your campaign as a stranger, so that after being sheltered in a tent, you may be welcomed with glory into your real home. For your home will be everlasting in heaven, provided you have led a good life in your tabernacle here below. Therefore in this tabernacle *Thou shalt protect them from the contradiction of tongues.* Many tongues are raised in contradiction: heresies of all kinds, schisms of all kinds claim a hearing; many tongues contradict the true doctrine. Do you run to the tabernacle of God, hold fast to the Catholic Church, do not swerve from the standard of truth, and you will find in the tabernacle a sanctuary from the contradiction of tongues.

9. [V. 22] *Blessed be the Lord, for He hath shown His wonderful mercy in a fenced city.* What is this fenced city? In Judea alone were God's people settled as if in the center of the world, and there God's praises resounded, sacrifices were offered to Him, and unceasing prophecy foretold the future, which today we see accomplished. These people were, so to speak, in the heart of heathen nations. The prophet contemplated and foresaw the Church of God which was to spread throughout all nations. Since all the nations encircled on every side and held in their midst the single race of the Jews, he terms these surrounding nations a fenced city. Truly hast thou shown thy wonderful mercy, O Lord, in the city of



Jerusalem; there did Christ suffer, there He rose again, there He ascended into heaven, there He wrought His manifold wonders. Yet greater praise still is thine because thou hast shown thy wonderful mercy in a fenced city; in other words, thou hast poured forth thy mercy over all nations. Nor hast thou stored up the ointment in Jerusalem as in a jar, but the jar has been broken, so to speak, the ointment poured out over the whole world,<sup>21</sup> in fulfilment of the words of Holy Scripture: *Thy name is as ointment poured out.*<sup>22</sup> It is thus that thou hast shown forth thy wonderful mercy in a fenced city. Christ ascended into heaven,<sup>23</sup> sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and after ten days sent forth the Holy Spirit. His disciples, filled with the Holy Ghost, began to preach the wonderful works of Christ; they were stoned, put to death, scattered in flight. And being forced, for instance, to flee from one spot,<sup>24</sup> like brands burning with divine fire they enkindled the whole forest of the world and filled it with the heat of the Holy Spirit and the light of truth; and the Lord showed forth His marvelous mercy in the fenced city.

10. [V. 23] *I said in my ecstasy*: You recall the title of the Psalm; here we have reached the ecstasy there mentioned. Notice his statement: *I said in my ecstasy: I am cast away from before thy eyes.* I said in my stupor—this is what the phrase *I said in my ecstasy* means. He sees that he is filled with a deep inward dread in face of some great trial or other, for there is never any lack of them; he notices his terrified and trembling heart. *I am cast away*, he says, *from before thy eyes.* If I were in thy presence, I should not fear as I do; if thou wert paying heed to me, I should not tremble thus. But as he has declared in another Psalm:<sup>25</sup> *If I said: My foot is moved, thy mercy, O Lord,*



*assisted me*; so he immediately adds here: *Therefore thou hast heard the voice of my prayer*. Because I made open confession, because I declared *I am cast away from before thy eyes*, because I did not stand forth in pride, but accused my own heart, and when staggering beneath the trial cried aloud to thee, thou hast heard my prayer. The passage I quoted from that other Psalm has thus reached its fulfilment. For the statement *I said in my ecstasy: I am cast away from before thy eyes* of this Psalm, becomes in the other: *If I said: My foot is moved*; and what is there expressed in the words *Thy mercy, O Lord, assisted me* is here rendered: *Therefore thou hast heard, O Lord, the voice of my prayer*.

See how this applies to Peter's life. He sees our Lord walking upon the waters and thinks he sees an apparition. Our Lord cries out: *It is I, fear not*. Peter, full of trust, makes answer: *If it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters*.<sup>26</sup> I shall prove that it is really thou if at thy bidding thy power becomes mine too. *And He said: Come*. Whereupon the bidding of Him who commands becomes the power of him who obeys. *Come*, He says. And he went down; he set out and went forward fearlessly, showing his trust in Him. *But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid*. *I said in my ecstasy: I am cast away from before thy eyes*. *And when he began to sink, he cried out: Lord, I perish*. *And Jesus, stretching forth His hand to him, raised him up, saying: O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?* I likewise have said in my fright: *I am cast away from before thy eyes*; and like him who was just now on the point of drowning in the sea, *Thou hast heard, O Lord, the voice of my prayer*. Thou hast heard, however, *when I cried to thee*. The cry that reaches God rises not from the voice but from the heart. Many, with silent lips, have sent forth a cry

from their hearts; many with shrill tongues yet with minds wandering have been able to obtain nothing. If you cry to God, then, let your cry be inward where God listens. *When I cried to thee*, says the Psalmist, *thou didst hear the voice of my prayer.*

11. Now that he has put it to the test, what does he exhort us to do? [V. 24] *O love the Lord, all ye His saints*; as much as to say: Believe me, I have proved it; I have been through trials, I have called upon Him and have not been deceived; I have hoped in God and have not been confounded; He has enlightened my mind and comforted my fears. *O love the Lord, all ye His saints*; in other words, it is for you to love the Lord who do not love the world, literally, *all ye His saints*. For how can I tell a man to love the Lord when he still loves the circus? Or how tell him to love the Lord if he still loves the clown and the ballet dancer, still loves wine-bibbing, still loves the parade of this world with all its empty trifles and senseless deceits? To such a man I should say: "To learn to love, learn first not to love; be averted in order to be converted; first empty in order to be filled." *O love the Lord, all ye His saints.*

12. *For the Lord will require truth.* You are aware of how many today are obviously given over to sin, you see other pluming themselves in vainglorious pride. The Lord will demand truth. *And will repay them that act exceedingly proudly.* Bear with them until you bury them, endure them until you are free of them; for the Lord will necessarily demand truth, and will repay these men who act from exceeding pride. You are on the point of asking: When will He repay? When it is His will. That He will repay, you may rest assured; of the retribution itself have

no doubt; as to when it will come, do not presume to give God advice. Of a certainty He will demand truth and will repay these men who act from pride above measure. Some He will repay even here below; we have both seen and experienced His retribution. For when God-fearing men who perhaps formerly shone in a position of some importance in the world are humiliated, their humiliation does not dishearten them, because they have not shut God out from their hearts. God is their greatness. Job seemed to be brought low. His wealth was lost, his children were lost, gone was all the provision he had made and gone were those for whom he had made it; he was left without inheritance, and what was worse, without an heir.<sup>27</sup> He was left with his wife alone: no comforter but rather the devil's ally.<sup>28</sup> To all appearances he was brought low. Consider whether it made him wretched, consider whether he was not hidden in the secret of God's face. *Naked, he said, came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return unto the earth. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord.*<sup>29</sup> Whence have these jewels of God's praise their being? Behold a man outwardly poor but inwardly rich. Could those jewels of God's praise fall from his lips unless he had a treasure stored up in his heart? If any of you would be rich, covet riches such as these, which can suffer no loss even by shipwreck. So when such men as these are brought low, do not consider them wretched. You are mistaken, ignorant as you are of their inward possession. You lovers of the world are judging others by yourselves; when you lose your worldly goods you are in a state of misery. From now onwards give up this way of thinking; they possess an inward source of joy. They have an inward ruler, an

inward shepherd and comforter. The men who fall miserably are those who place their hope in this present life. The brilliant outward show is taken away, and nothing is left except the inward smoldering of an evil conscience. They can draw upon no source of comfort; they have nothing external in which to lose themselves, nothing internal to fall back upon; forsaken by worldly splendor, empty of divine grace, they are truly abject. And God treats many men thus in their lifetime, but not every man. For supposing He dealt in this manner with no one, divine providence might seem heedless, if I may say so; if He dealt thus with all, divine patience would not be preserved. But you, Christian, you have been taught to endure, not to pay back.<sup>30</sup> Do you, a Christian, want to be avenged? Christ has not yet been avenged. What injury have you suffered which He has not suffered? Did not He, who had no cause for suffering, suffer first for your sake? For you, trials are the goldsmith's furnace (supposing you to be gold and not chaff); the fire is to set you free from dross, not to reduce you to ashes.

13. *O love the Lord, all ye His saints; for the Lord will require truth and will repay them that act exceedingly proudly.* But when will He repay them? Oh if only He would do it now! It is now that I should like to see them abject and humbled to the dust! Listen to what follows: [V. 25] *Do ye manfully.* Do not let your weary hands droop inert under trials, or your knees give way.<sup>31</sup> *Do ye manfully. And let your heart be strengthened.* Take heart, have the strength to endure and bear the brunt of this life's ills. But to whom does the prophet address the words: *Do ye manfully, and let your heart be strengthened?* Is it to men who prize the world? No. Listen. He addresses *all ye that hope in the Lord.*



## FIRST DISCOURSE ON PSALM 31

1. [Verse 1] *To David himself, understanding,*<sup>1</sup> which makes us realize that man is set at liberty, not by any merit of good works, but by the grace of God upon confession of his sins.

2. [V. 2] *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered:* and whose sins are dropped into oblivion. *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin and in whose mouth*<sup>2</sup> *there is no guile:* he displays no ostentation of righteousness in his speech, since his conscience is laden with sin.

3. [V. 3] *Because I was silent, my bones grew old:* because my lips did not make a confession which would have saved me,<sup>3</sup> my strength has degenerated into feeble old age. *Whilst I cried out all the day long:* In my impiety I uttered blasphemous complaints against God, as if to defend and excuse my sins.

4. [V. 4] *For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me,* because under the incessant pain of thy scourgings *I turned in my anguish,*<sup>4</sup> *whilst the thorn was fastened.* At sight of my own misery, the goad of a guilty conscience made me only the more wretched.

5. [V. 5] (*Diapsalma.*<sup>5</sup>) *I have known my sin, and my injustice I have not concealed:* that is, I have not hidden this injustice of mine. *I said: I will proclaim against myself my injustice to the Lord.* I said: I will cry aloud, not against God, as my impiety cried out even when I held my tongue, but against myself: I will proclaim my injustice to the Lord. *And thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my heart:*<sup>6</sup> when thou didst listen to the cry of



acknowledgment in my heart, before ever it reached my lips.

6. [V. 6] *For this shall everyone that is holy pray to thee in a seasonable time:* This impiety of heart must cause every devout soul to turn to thee in prayer. For they will become saints not by their own merits, but in due season, that is, at His coming who has redeemed us from our sins. *And yet in a flood of many waters they shall not come nigh unto Him.* And yet nobody must take for granted that when the end comes suddenly, as it did in the days of Noe, he will be given that chance of confession of sin which opens the way to God.<sup>7</sup>

7. [V. 7] *Thou art my refuge from the trouble which hath encompassed me:* Thou art my refuge from the pressure of sin which has gripped my heart. *My joy, deliver me from them that surround me:* My joy is wholly in thee; deliver me from the sorrow my sins have brought upon me.

8. (*Diapsalma.*) God replies: [V. 8] *I will give thee understanding, and I will set<sup>8</sup> thee in this way in which thou shalt go.* In exchange for your confession of sin I will give you understanding, so that you may never turn back from the way upon which you have entered, or strive to be your own master. *I will fix my eyes upon thee:* thus will I surround thee with an abiding love.

9. [V. 9] *Do not become like the horse and the mule, who have no understanding.* That is why they want to go their own way. And the prophet's voice continues: *With bit and bridle bind fast their jaws.* Therefore treat them, O God, like the horse and mule, and so by chastisement compel those *who come not near to thee* to accept thy guidance.

10. [V. 10] *Many are the scourges of the sinner: Bitter*

punishment awaits him who will not confess his sins to God, but insists on being his own ruler. *But mercy shall encompass him that hopeth in the Lord:* but the man who hopes in the Lord, and surrenders himself to His governance, mercy shall enfold.

11. [V. 11] *Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye just:* be glad and rejoice, ye just, not in yourselves but in the Lord. *And glory, all ye right of heart:* and exult in Him all you who have realized how good a thing it is to serve Him, so that one day you may be set before the rest.

## SECOND DISCOURSE ON PSALM 31<sup>1</sup>

1. This Psalm, which treats of the grace of God and of our justification, not through any preceding merits of our own but through the forestalling mercy of the Lord our God, has been particularly brought to our notice, as the Lesson read before it made plain to all,<sup>2</sup> by the voice of the Apostle; and this it is which, inadequate though I am, I have undertaken to discuss with you, beloved brethren. To begin with, then, I commend my inability to your prayers, *that speech may be given me*, as the Apostle says, *that I may open my mouth*,<sup>3</sup> and address you in such a way that speaking may hold no peril for me, and hearing may be salutary for you. For the human spirit, uncertain and wavering between the acknowledgment of its weakness and overreliance on its own strength, is all too often buffeted to and fro, and so harassed that if it falls in either direction it must necessarily be hurled headlong. Let us suppose a man yields wholly to his own weakness and is swayed by this idea: he argues that God's mercy overshadows all sinners whatever be their obstinacy in sin, for if they do but believe, God absolves them, God forgives

them, and thus it is arranged that none of the faithful, however unrighteous, shall perish at the last; in other words, none shall perish who tell themselves: "Whatever I do, with whatever crimes and infamies I befoul myself, however much I sin, God in His mercy absolves me, because I have believed in Him."<sup>4</sup> If, I say, he assures himself that nobody of this sort shall perish, he is being led into a false doctrine on the impunity of sinners. But God who is just, whose mercy and judgment are hymned in the Psalm<sup>5</sup>—not only mercy, but also judgment—finds this man wrongfully presuming on His bounty, abusing the mercy of God to his own destruction, and has no other course but to condemn him. Such an idea, then, casts man down a precipice.

But if another, in dread of this danger, scales the heights of presumption, and relying on his own powers and his own righteousness makes up his mind to fulfil all due observance, and so to perform all things commanded in the Law as to offend in nothing; if moreover he regards himself as so much master of his own life as to waver in nothing, fail in nothing, err in nothing, be shortsighted in nothing, and if he attributes everything to himself and his own will power, then even should he fulfil all that seems righteous in the sight of men, so that nothing humanly reprehensible is to be found in his life—this very presumption and vainglory God again condemns. What is the conclusion? Should a man consider himself just and rely on his own righteousness? He falls. Should he ponder and reflect upon his own weakness, and taking God's mercy for granted thus neglect to cleanse his life from his own sins, he plunges head over ears into a whirlpool of depravity; he likewise falls. To presume on one's own merits is, so to speak, the right hand; to expect impunity for

one's sins, the left. Let us listen<sup>6</sup> to God's voice saying to us: *Decline not to the right hand nor to the left.*<sup>7</sup> Do not claim the right to the kingdom on the grounds of your own justice, nor the right to sin on the grounds of God's mercy. The divine precept warns you away from both dangers, from the peak of pride and the slough of sin. If you scale the one, you will plunge into the precipice; if you sink into the other, it will swallow you up. *Decline not to the right hand*, says the wise man, *nor to the left.* I am going to repeat it in few words to engrave it on every mind: Do not claim the right to the kingdom on the grounds of your own justice, nor the right to sin on the grounds of God's mercy. You will answer: "Then what am I to do?" This Psalm teaches us; and when we have been through it and discussed it, I think that by the help of God's mercy we shall see the way along which we either are or at least ought to be walking. Each one can listen according to his own capacity, and according to his own self-knowledge either be sorry he stands in need of correction or be glad he deserves approval. If he finds he has gone astray, he must retrace his steps so as to walk in the right way; if he finds he is in the right way, he must go on to reach the journey's end. No elation off the right road, no loitering along it.

2. The Apostle Paul assures us that this Psalm treats of the grace by virtue of which we are Christians: that is why we have had this lesson read to you. In order to establish the justice which comes from faith, against those who boast of the justice which comes from works, the Apostle spoke thus: *What shall we say, then, that Abraham hath found, who is our father according to the flesh? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God.*<sup>8</sup> May God Himself preserve



us from any such boasting! Let us rather listen to this: *He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*<sup>9</sup> Many indeed take pride in their good works, and you find many pagans who do not wish to become Christians precisely because they are satisfied, so to speak, with the goodness of their own lives. "One is bound to lead a good life," says he. "What can Christ teach me? To lead a good life? I lead a good life already: what need have I of Christ? I never commit murder or theft or robbery, I do not covet other people's belongings, I do not pollute myself with adultery. Let something blameworthy be found in my life, and he who convicts me may make me a Christian!" He has something to be proud of, but not in God's sight. Not thus was it with our father Abraham. This sentence of Scripture is meant to direct our attention to that very point. Because we say and we believe exactly this, that the holy patriarch was pleasing to God, we recognize and proclaim that he had glory in God's sight, as the Apostle affirms: "Undoubtedly it is well known and evident to us that Abraham is glorious in the eyes of God. If, however, Abraham was justified by works, he may have glory, but not in God's sight. But he truly has glory in God's sight. Therefore he was not justified by works. If, then, Abraham was not justified by works, by what was he justified?" He proceeds to tell us: *For what saith the Scripture?* That is, "By what means does the Scripture say Abraham was justified?" *Abraham believed God, and it was reputed to him unto justice.*<sup>10</sup> Therefore Abraham was justified by faith.

3. Now he who hears "Not by works, but by faith" must beware of that whirlpool I have already mentioned: "You see, then, that Abraham was justified through faith, not through works. Very well, I shall do as I please, for



if I merely believe in God, even though I may have no good works to show, it will be credited to me for justice.” The man who has used that language and acted upon it has slipped in and been swallowed up; if he is still thinking about it and wavering, he is in danger. However, the Word of God and a right understanding of it can not only rescue one in danger from his peril, but can also raise a drowned man from the depths. I make answer, then, as if contradicting the Apostle, and I assert of this same Abraham what we find, moreover, in the epistle of another apostle, who wished to correct men who had misinterpreted Paul. James, writing in his epistle to refute those who, trusting to faith alone, refused to do good works, commended the works of this same Abraham, whereas Paul had commended his faith—and the apostles are not opposed to each other.<sup>11</sup> Now he mentions a deed known to everybody, when Abraham offered up his son in sacrifice to God. A great deed; but it proceeded from faith. I applaud the superstructure, but I behold its foundation in faith: I applaud the fruit of a good deed, but I acknowledge that it was rooted in faith. If Abraham had acted thus apart from a right faith, it would have profited him nothing, whatever the deed. Again, if Abraham had interpreted his faith in such a way that when God commanded him to offer up his son to Him in sacrifice, he had said to himself: “I shall not, but all the same I know that God will absolve me even though I despise His commands”—his faith without works would have been dead, and would have remained barren and dry like a root without fruit.

4. What then? Must we hold that no good works can precede faith, so that nobody can be said to have labored to any purpose before he had faith? Before faith those

very works so called, praiseworthy though they may seem to men, are worthless. So they appear to me to be like great feats of strength and swift running—off the track. Nobody must set any store by his good works before he had faith: where there was no faith, there was no good work. It is the intention which makes the work good; and faith directs the intention. Do not consider overmuch what a man does, but rather what he is aiming at when he does it, by what course he directs all the power and perfection of his steering. Granted that a man steers his ship excellently, but has got off his course; what does it avail him that he keeps the topsail set correctly, sails perfectly, follows the current, takes care lest the sides of the ship should be stove in? So powerful a man is he that he can turn the ship whither and whence he wills. When asked: “Which way are you going?”, he says: “I do not know,” or else he says, not: “I do not know,” but: “I am going to such and such a port”—and yet he is not making for port but for the rocks! The more nimble and efficient in steering the ship this man thinks himself, the more dangerously is he not steering it, so as to bring it all the faster to shipwreck? Just like that is the man who runs excellently, but off the course. Would it not be better and more to the purpose if that steersman were a little less efficient, so as to manage his steering gear only with labor and difficulty, and yet held to the straight and proper course? Or again, if this other man, sauntering languidly along, merely trod the right road instead of running swiftly in some other direction? Best of all, then, is the man who keeps to the right way and walks briskly along it; but he comes next who even though he may limp somewhat, yet so long as he does not go astray or stand still, nevertheless makes headway by degrees. There is at

least some hope that he will arrive, even though tardily, at his destination.

5. Therefore, brethren, Abraham was justified through faith; but though good works did not precede faith, nevertheless they followed it. Is your faith going to prove unfruitful? If you yourself are not unfruitful, neither will your faith be unfruitful. You have given credence to some forbidden thing and burnt up the root of your faith with the fire of your perversity. Now, hold fast your faith and set to work with it. But you say: "That is not what the Apostle Paul tells us." On the contrary, that is precisely what the Apostle Paul does tell us. *Faith*, says he, *that worketh by charity*;<sup>12</sup> and in another place: *Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law*;<sup>13</sup> and again: *For all the law is fulfilled in one word (as it is written): "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*<sup>14</sup> Look and see whether he does not want you to produce works, when he says: *Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in this word: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."* The love of our neighbor *worketh no evil. Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law*.<sup>15</sup> Does love allow you to do any harm to him you love? However, perhaps you merely do no evil, nor any good either. Very well; does love allow you not to do all that lies in your power for the object of your love? Is it not love that prays even for one's enemies? And will he fail a friend who wishes well to an enemy? Consequently, if faith be without love it will be without works. And in order not to concentrate overmuch on the achievements of your faith, unite to it hope and charity, and do not occupy yourself with what you are doing. Love itself cannot be idle. What but love is the active force, even for

evil, in any man? Find me a love idle and unproductive! Crime, adultery, villainy, murder, excesses of all kinds, are they not the work of love? Cleanse your love therefore; turn into the garden the water that was running down the drain: the same ardor that it poured out upon the world, let it pour out upon the Maker of the world. Am I telling you: "Love nothing"? Nonsense! Lazy, dead, detestable, wretched will you be if you love nothing. Love, but take care what it is you love. The love of God, the love of one's neighbor, are termed charity; the love of earthly things, the love of this world, are termed passion. Bridle your passion, stir up your charity. For charity in one who performs good works gives him the hope of possessing a good conscience. A good conscience generates hope: just as a bad conscience is wholly pervaded with despair, so is a good conscience with hope. You will thus possess those three virtues of which the Apostle speaks: *faith, hope and charity*.<sup>16</sup> In another place, too, he has stated that *the end of the commandment* is these same three, only he substitutes for "hope" *a good conscience*. What is meant by *the end of the commandment*? That by which the commandments are fulfilled—not destroyed! For we mean one thing when we say: "The food is ended," and another when we say: "The tunic which was in making is ended": the food is ended in the sense of there being none left, the tunic is ended in the sense of being completed; the same word is used for both. Thus he spoke of *the end of the commandment* in this context, not as though the commandments are made void thereby, but to show how they are fulfilled—consummated, not consumed! The end, then, is for the sake of these three:<sup>17</sup> *The end of the commandment*, he says, is *charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an*



*unfeigned faith*.<sup>18</sup> Instead of "hope" he has written *a good conscience*. For that man hopes who possesses a good conscience. But he who is stung by a guilty conscience turns his back on hope and can expect nothing for himself except damnation. To hope for the kingdom he must have a good conscience; and to have a good conscience he must have faith and good works. Faith causes him to believe, charity to act. In one place, then, the Apostle begins with faith: *Faith, hope and charity*; but in another place he begins with charity itself: *charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith*. We, however, are beginning in the middle, with conscience and hope. Whoever, I repeat, wants to possess hope must possess a good conscience; and to possess a good conscience he must have faith and good works. From the middle we can proceed to the beginning and the end: a man must have faith and good works. His believing is a matter of faith; his work, a matter of charity.

6. How is it then that the Apostle says that man is justified by faith without works,<sup>19</sup> whereas in another place he speaks of *faith that worketh by charity*?<sup>20</sup> Let us set, not the Apostle James against Paul, but the Apostle Paul against Paul himself, and say to him: "In one place you seem to give us leave to sin with impunity, when you say *We account a man to be justified by faith without works*; and in another place you speak of *faith that worketh by charity*. How is it that in one place I seem to be safe even if I have performed no works, but in another, apparently I have neither hope nor indeed genuine faith unless I have labored through love? I am listening to your own words, O Apostle. Here you obviously want to bring to my notice faith without works. But the outcome of faith is love; and this love cannot be idle, but it must



do no evil, and must do whatever good lies in its power. What does love do?<sup>21</sup> *Decline from evil and do good.* Thus you point to this faith without works; and in another place you say: *And if I should have faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*<sup>22</sup> Therefore if faith is no use to me without charity, and charity needs must work wherever it is, then faith itself works through love. Therefore how shall a man be justified by faith without works?"

The Apostle himself makes answer: "I told you this, O man, so that you should not appear to rely on your own works, or attribute to their merit the grace of faith you have received. Do not count on your works which preceded faith. You know that faith found you a sinner, and if faith, when bestowed, made you just, yet it was an ungodly man it found to justify." *To him, he says, that believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reputed to justice.*<sup>23</sup> If an ungodly man is justified, from being a wicked he becomes a just man: if from being wicked he becomes just, what are the works of the ungodly worth? Let the ungodly man boast of his works and say: "I give to the poor, I take away nothing from any one, I covet nobody else's wife, I kill nobody, I defraud nobody, I pay back what was deposited with me even in the absence of witnesses." All this he may say; I ask, is he godfearing or godless? "And how can I be godless," he says, "since I act thus?" Like those of whom it is said: *And they served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.*<sup>24</sup> How are you ungodly? Supposing from all these good deeds either you look for a right reward but do not look to the rightful Giver, or else you look for something you have no right to expect, at any rate from Him who is the Giver of eternal life? In exchange for your good deeds you have

looked for some earthly happiness—then you are ungodly. Not such is faith's reward. Faith is a precious thing, you have bartered it for something worthless. Therefore you are impious and those works of yours are worth nothing. Even though you exert your strength in good works and appear to be steering your ship excellently, you are hastening on to the rocks. Supposing you are hoping for a right reward, I mean eternal life, but not from the Lord God through Jesus Christ, through whom alone eternal life is given, but you think you can attain to eternal life by means of the host of heaven, the sun and moon, the powers of air and sea, of earth and stars? You are godless. Believe in Him who justifies the ungodly, so that your good works may really be good works. For I should not call them good as long as they do not proceed from a right foundation. How does the matter stand? Either you look for temporal life from God the Eternal, or you look for eternal life from the devils: in either case, you are ungodly. Put your faith right, set your faith in order, set your life in order: and now if you have sound feet, go straight ahead without anxiety; run, you are on the right road: the faster you run the sooner you will get there. But possibly you are a little lame. At least do not turn back from the road; you will arrive, even if rather late; do not stand still, do not retrace your steps, do not wander off the track.

7. What then? Who are the blessed? Not those in whom God has not found sin: for He has found it in all men. *For all have sinned and do need the glory of God.*<sup>25</sup> Therefore if sin is found in all, it follows that none are blessed but those whose sins are forgiven. Now this the Apostle pointed out in these words: *Abraham believed God, and it was reputed to him unto justice. Now to him that worketh*—that is, who trusts to works, and affirms

that by virtue of them he received the grace of faith—the reward is not reckoned according to grace, but according to debt.<sup>26</sup> What does this mean, but that our reward is called grace? If it is grace, it is given gratis. What is the meaning of “it is given gratis”? On every count it is a free gift. You have done nothing to deserve it, and you receive the remission of your sins. Your works are examined and found to be all evil. If God were to give you their due for such works, undoubtedly He would condemn you: *For the wages of sin is death.*<sup>27</sup> What do wicked deeds deserve, except condemnation? And good deeds? The kingdom of heaven. But you have been found out in wicked deeds: if you receive your deserts you will be punished. Now what is it that happens? God does not mete out the penalty you deserved, but He bestows on you the grace you did not deserve. He should have punished you; instead He pardoned you. So by virtue of His pardon you enter upon a life of faith; and at once that faith, taking to itself hope and love, begins to perform good works. But do not forthwith grow boastful and exalt yourself. Never forget who set you on the right road; never forget that, though sturdy and fleet of foot, you were straying off it; never forget how, sick as you were, and lying half-dead by the roadside, you were placed upon a beast and brought to the inn.<sup>28</sup> *Now to him that worketh*, the Apostle continues, *the reward is not reckoned according to grace, but according to debt.* If you want to be cast forth from grace, brag about your merits. God sees what is in you, and He knows what is each one’s due. *But to him that worketh not*—what? Take, for instance, some godless sinner; he produces no works. What then? But he *believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly*. In so far, then, as he does no works to the purpose, he is un-

godly; and if he appears to perform good works, yet being performed without faith they are not to be called good. *But to him that believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reputed to justice; as David also termeth the blessedness of a man to whom God reputeth justice without works.*<sup>29</sup> But what justice? That of faith, which is not preceded, but is followed, by good works.

8. Now pay attention: otherwise, if you misunderstand, you will fling yourselves into that whirlpool of thinking you may sin with impunity; and I shall be free from blame, just as the Apostle himself was free from blame for all those who misinterpreted him. They wilfully misunderstood; otherwise they would have had to follow it up with good works. Do not make common cause with such people, brethren. Another Psalm has said of one such man, and it applies to the class as to the individual: *He would not understand, that he might do well.*<sup>30</sup> It does not say: "He could not understand." Therefore to act aright you must have the will to understand; then you will arrive at a clear understanding. What do I mean by a clear understanding? Nobody must boast of the good works he did before he had faith; nobody must be sluggish in doing good works now that faith is his. It is God who pardons all the ungodly and makes them just through faith.

9. [Verses 1, 2] *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin, and in whose mouth there is no guile.* Now the Psalm begins, and it begins with "understanding." Very well; understanding or intelligence means just this, that you should know you ought neither to boast of your merits nor to trust that sin will go unpunished. The title of the Psalm runs thus: *To David himself, understanding.* This Psalm is called of



*understanding.* The first piece of knowledge, then, is that you should know yourself for a sinner. From that will follow the knowledge that when, as a result of faith, you begin, through love, to perform good works, you must ascribe that not to your own powers but to the grace of God. Thus there will be no guile in your heart, that is, in your inward mouth; nor will you have one thing on your tongue and another in your mind. You will not be one of those Pharisees of whom it is said: *You are like to whited sepulchres, you outwardly indeed appear to men just, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*<sup>31</sup> Is not he a hypocrite who, wicked though he is, pretends to be just? He is not that Nathanael, is he, of whom our Lord says: *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile?* How comes it that there was no guile in this Nathanael? *When thou wast under the fig tree,* He says, *I saw thee.*<sup>32</sup> He was under the fig tree—he was in his natural state. If he was in his natural state because he was held bound by the sinfulness of his origin, he was under that fig tree which drew from the Psalmist elsewhere the groan: *For behold I was conceived in iniquity.*<sup>33</sup> But He who came with grace saw him. What do we mean by “saw him”? He had pity on him. Therefore He points out the man without guile in such a way as to point out His grace in him. *When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. I saw thee*—what is there of any importance about that, unless you understand that it was spoken with some special meaning? What is there of any importance about seeing a man under a fig tree? Unless Christ had seen the human race under that fig tree, either we should have withered away altogether or else, like the Pharisees, in whom there was guile—that is, they justified themselves in word, but were evil in their doings—only leaves would



be found among us, not fruits. For when Christ beheld a fig tree such as that, He cursed it, and it withered. "Do I see," He said, "only leaves, that is, mere words without fruit? *May it wither*, and no longer bear even leaves!"<sup>34</sup> Why does He take away the words as well? Because a dry tree cannot even bear leaves. So was it with the Jews; the Pharisees were that tree: they had words, they had no deeds; by our Lord's judgment they deserved to be shriveled up. May Christ see us under the fig tree; may He moreover see in our flesh the fruit of good works, so that we may not wither away beneath His curse. And because everything is imputed to His grace, not to our merits, *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*: not those in whom sins have not been found, but whose sins are covered. The sins are hidden, covered, wiped out. If God covered sins up, then He refused to notice them; if He refused to notice them, He refused to censure them; if He refused to censure them, then He refused to punish them; if He refused to punish them, then He refused to acknowledge them, He preferred rather to pardon them. *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*. And you are not to understand the Psalmist's words, that *sins are covered*, as though they were still there alive. Then why has he said that *sins are covered*? Because they are no longer visible. What does it mean for God to see sins, except to punish sins? To make us realize that for God to see sins is the same as to punish sins, what does he say to Him? *Turn away thy face from my sins*.<sup>35</sup> He must not look at your sins, if He is to look at you. How is He to look at you? As He did at Nathanael: *When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee*. The shade of the fig tree did not obstruct the eyes of God's mercy.

10. *And in whose mouth there is no guile.* On the contrary, those who refuse to confess their sins make useless efforts to excuse them. And the harder they labor to make excuses for their sins, crying up their merits and blinding themselves to their misdeeds, the more their vigor and courage fail them. He is truly strong who is strong not in himself but in God. For that reason, *Thrice I besought the Lord that He would take it away from me; and He said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee.* My grace, said He, not “thy power.” My grace, said He, *is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity.* For this reason St. Paul says in another place, *When I am weak, then am I powerful.*<sup>36</sup> Therefore he who would be strong, trusting in his own strength and boasting of his own merits, whatever they may be worth, will be like that Pharisee who in his arrogance went on to boast of what he had in fact acknowledged to be a gift from God: *I give thee thanks,* said he. Take heed, my brethren, what kind of pride God brings to our notice: what kind of pride actually can steal into a righteous man, or even creep unawares into one who raises high hopes. *I give thee thanks,* he said. Thus in saying, *I give thee thanks,* he acknowledged that he had received from Him what he possessed. For *what hast thou that thou hast not received?*<sup>37</sup> To resume—he said: *I give thee thanks. I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican.* Where, then, was his pride? Not that he thanked God for his good deeds, but that he exalted himself above another by reason of those same good deeds.

11. Be on your guard, brethren; for the Evangelist began by stating what led up to our Lord’s speaking this parable. Christ had said: *The Son of Man when He cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth?* Now there may exist

some heretics who really are convinced that almost the whole world has fallen into error, and since all heretics form little groups and factions, they would like to boast that what had perished from the world at large still survived among themselves.<sup>38</sup> However, as soon as our Lord had said: *The Son of Man when He cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth?*, the Evangelist subjoined: *And to some who trusted in themselves as just and despised others, He spoke also this parable: A certain Pharisee and a publican went up into the temple to pray—and the rest that you already know. That Pharisee then spoke thus: I give thee thanks. But wherein lay his pride? In that he despised others. How do you prove that? From his own words. How so? That Pharisee, said he, despised the other standing at a distance, whereas God drew near him as he made his acknowledgment. The publican, said he, stood afar off: but God was not standing afar off from him. Why do we say God was not standing afar off from him? Because it is said in another text: The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart.*<sup>39</sup> See whether this publican had not a contrite heart, and then you will see that *the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart. And the publican standing afar off would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast. The striking of his breast typified the contrition of his heart. What did he say as he struck his breast? O God, be merciful to me a sinner. And what sentence did our Lord pronounce? Amen I say to you, this publican went down from the temple justified rather than the Pharisee. Why? Such is God's judgment. I am not as this publican is, I am not as the rest of men, unjust, extortioners, adulterers: I fast twice in a week, I give tithes of all that I possess. The other dares not raise his eyes towards heaven, he examines*

his conscience, he stands at a distance; and he is made acceptable to God rather than that Pharisee. Why? I beseech thee, O Lord, explain to us this justice of thine, explain to us the equity of thy law. God explains to us the working of His ordinance. Would you hear why? *Because everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*<sup>40</sup>

12. Redouble your attention, beloved brethren. I have said that the publican dared not lift up his eyes towards heaven. Why did he not consider the heavens? Because he was only considering himself. He considered himself to such purpose that first he became displeasing to himself and thereupon he became pleasing to God. Suppose, however, you boast and hold your head high. Our Lord says to the proud man: "You will not look into yourself? I am doing so. Would you rather I did not? Do it yourself." The reason why the publican dared not raise his eyes to heaven was because he was examining himself, he was castigating his own conscience. He was his own judge, that our Lord might plead for him; he condemned, that our Lord might acquit; he prosecuted, that our Lord might defend. He did indeed defend him, for He delivered sentence in his favor. *This publican went down justified rather than that Pharisee: because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* He examined himself, our Lord said, and I chose not to examine him; I heard him saying: *Turn away thine eyes from my sins.* Who is it that spoke thus, but he who also said: *For I know my iniquity?*<sup>41</sup> Mark well, my brethren, that Pharisee too was a sinner. In spite of saying, *I am not as the rest of men, unjust, extortioners, adulterers,* in spite of fasting twice a week, in spite of paying tithes—in spite of all this, he was nothing but a sinner.



Had he been otherwise flawless, that pride of his would have been a grave offense; and then behold he enumerates a list of virtues! Pray, who is without sin? Who shall boast that he has a pure heart? Who shall boast that he is clear of sin?<sup>42</sup> He had sins then, but in his perversity he forgot where he was standing; he was, so to speak, in the doctor's consulting room for treatment—and he exhibited his sound members but hid his wounds! Let God, not yourself, cover your sores. For if you insist on hiding them for shame, the physician will not cure them. Let the physician cover them and cure them; for he will cover them with a dressing. Under the physician's covering the wound heals; under the patient's covering it is merely hidden. From whom are you hiding it? From One who knows all things.

13. So now, brethren, see what the Psalmist has said: [V. 3] *Because I was silent, my bones grew old through my crying out all the day long.* What is the meaning of this? It seems, so to speak, a contradiction, *Because I was silent, my bones grew old through my crying out.* If it was from his crying out, how was he silent? He kept silence in one way, he did not keep silence in another: he kept silence from what would have done him good, he did not keep silence from what would have done him harm; he kept silence from the acknowledgment of his guilt, he proclaimed his audacity aloud. *I was silent*, he said, "I made no acknowledgment." He ought to have spoken; he should have been silent about his merits and proclaimed his offenses: but now in his perversity he kept silence about his sins and proclaimed his merits. And what happened to him? His bones grew old. Observe that if he had cried forth his sins and held his peace about his merits, his bones, that is to say his strength, would have been re-



newed: he would have been strong in the Lord, for he would have found out that he was weak in himself. But now, wishing to be steadfast of himself, he became weak, and his bones grew old. He who had no liking for the renewal which confession would give, remained sunk in his decrepitude. You know, brethren, who are made young again, because *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*. This man did not want to have his sins forgiven him; he heaped them up, he defended them, he boasted of his merits. Therefore, because he kept silence from acknowledging his guilt, his bones grew old. *Through my crying out all the day long*. What is the meaning of *Through my crying out all the day long*? Through his insistence on defending his sins. And yet see what kind of man this is, for he comes to the knowledge of himself. Soon he will show understanding: he will look at nothing beyond himself, and he will be displeased with himself, because he sees through himself. Now you must listen and you will be healed.

14. *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin, and in whose mouth there is no guile. Because I was silent my bones grew old, through my crying out all the day long.* [V. 4] *For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me.* What is the meaning of *thy hand was heavy upon me*? The meaning, brethren, is profound. Recall that just sentence our Lord pronounced on those two, the Pharisee and the publican. What did He say of the Pharisee? *He is humbled*. What of the publican? *He is exalted*. Why is the one humbled? Because he exalted himself. Why is the other exalted? Because he humbled himself. To humble the one who exalts himself, then, God lays a heavy hand upon him. He refused to humble himself by confessing his iniquity, and he is humiliated

under the weight of God's hand. When could he endure the heavy hand of Him who humiliates? How light was His hand who raised him up!<sup>43</sup> It was strong in the one and strong in the other: strong to crush him, strong to raise him up.

15. Therefore *For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; I am turned in my anguish, whilst the thorn is fastened.* This very pressure of thy hand, this very humiliation has converted me in my anguish; I have become wretched, the thorn rankles in me, I am pricked in conscience. What happened to him when the thorn rankled? He was made to feel pain, he discovered his weakness. And he who had never avowed his sin, but had cried out to defend it to the point of deadening his courage, in other words, hastening the decrepitude of his bones—what does he do now under the prick of the thorn? [V. 5] *I have acknowledged my sin.* Now he really does acknowledge it. If the one acknowledges, the Other ignores. Listen to what follows: see if he himself does not say so. *I have acknowledged my sin, and my injustice I have not concealed.* This I have already told you a little while ago. Reveal it first yourself, then God will conceal it. *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.* Those who conceal their sins are stripped naked; the Psalmist laid them bare, in order to be covered up. *My injustice I have not concealed.* What is the meaning of *I have not concealed*? A little while ago I kept silence: but now—? *I said.* This is clean contrary to such keeping of silence. *I said.* What did you say? *I will proclaim<sup>44</sup> against myself my injustice to the Lord; and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my heart. I said.* What did you say? He is not yet speaking out, he is promising that he will speak out: and already God forgives. Mark my words,

brethren, this is an important point; he said: *I will proclaim*; he did not say: "I have proclaimed, and thou hast forgiven." He said: *I will proclaim, and thou hast forgiven*. For by the very act of saying *I will proclaim* he showed that he had not yet proclaimed it with his tongue, though he had done so in his heart. This very saying *I will proclaim* was in itself a proclamation: so *thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my heart*. Thus my acknowledgment of guilt had not yet reached my tongue, for I had simply said: *I will proclaim against myself*; God, however, heard the voice of my heart. The words were not yet on my lips, but God's ear was already listening in my heart. *Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my heart*, because I have said *I will proclaim*.

16. But that would not have been sufficient: he did not say *I will proclaim my injustice to the Lord*. Not without reason did he say *I will proclaim against myself*. That is very much to the purpose. Many indeed proclaim their iniquity, but against the Lord God Himself: when they are found out in sin they say: "God willed that." If a man says: "I did not do it," or: "That deed you are reprehending is not a sin," he makes no pronouncement either against himself or against God. If he says: "Certainly I did it, and it is a sin, but God would have it so—what had I to do with it?", that is uttering a verdict against God. Perhaps you say: "Nobody says that. Whoever says 'God willed that'?" Many do say even that. As for those who do not say it outright, what else are they saying when they say: "My fate did it; my stars were the cause"? Thus surely they intend indirectly to attack God. Those who will not take a short cut to be reconciled to God, prefer to go a long way round to accuse Him, and say: "My fate did it." What is fate? "My stars were the cause." What

do you mean by stars? No doubt, those we see in the sky. And who made them? God. Who set them in their courses? God. So you see that you meant to say: "God drove me to sin." Then He is unjust and yourself just; for unless He had so ordered things, you would not have sinned. Drop those excuses for your sins; remember that Psalm: *Incline not my heart to evil words, to make excuses in sins, with men that work iniquity.*

But, it may be objected, those are men of importance who defend their sins; those are important also who number the stars, and calculate the stars and the times, and declare when any one either sins or leads a good life, and when Mars commits murder and Venus adultery: great men they are and learned, and obviously eminent in this world. But what does the Psalmist say? *Incline not my heart to evil words, with men that work iniquity, and I will not communicate with the choicest of them.*<sup>45</sup> Let these folk call those that number the constellations eminent and learned, let them call those wise who, so to speak, tell off human destinies on their fingers and decide men's conduct from the stars. God created me with free will: if I have sinned, it was I who sinned; so I will not merely proclaim my iniquity to the Lord; I will accuse myself, not Him. *I said: O Lord, be thou merciful to me;* the sick man cries out to the physician: *I said.* Why *Ego dixi: I said?* The verb *dixi* alone would suffice: *Ego* adds emphasis; it is I, I myself, not fate, not fortune, not the devil, for even he did not compel me, but I myself yielded to his persuasion: *I said: O Lord, be thou merciful to me, heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.*<sup>46</sup> This is the resolution the Psalmist here stressed: *I said: I will proclaim against myself my injustice to the Lord, and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my heart.*



17. [V. 6] *For this shall every one that is holy pray to thee in a seasonable time.* At what time? *This time.* Why so? For his wickedness. To what end? Precisely for forgiveness of his sins. *For this shall every one that is holy pray to thee in a seasonable time.* Thereupon every one that is holy shall pray to thee, because thou hast forgiven his sins. For without thy forgiveness there would be no one holy to call upon thee. *For this shall every one that is holy pray to thee in a seasonable time:* when the New Dispensation is revealed, when the grace of Christ is revealed—that is the seasonable time. *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman*<sup>47</sup>—that is, of a female; the ancients used the terms indifferently—*made under the Law, that He might redeem them who were under the Law.* Redeem them from what? From the devil, from perdition, from their sins, from him to whom they had sold themselves. *That He might redeem them who were under the Law.* They were indeed under the Law, in the sense that the Law was crushing them. Their condition crushed them, by convicting them of guilt without bringing them salvation. No doubt the Law forbade wrongdoing; but since they had no power in themselves to make themselves just, they were forced to cry out to God, as he cried out who was led away captive under the law of sin: *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*<sup>48</sup> All men were under the Law, not within the Law: it weighed them down, it convicted them of guilt. The Law made sin known; it fastened the thorn, it caused the heart to be pricked; it warned every man to recognize himself as guilty and to call out to God for pardon. *For this shall every one that is holy pray to thee in a seasonable time.* Now I have explained the seasonable time in the phrase:



*When the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son. And the Apostle says again: In an accepted and favorable time have I heard thee, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee. And because this prediction of the prophet concerns all Christians, he adds: Behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation. For this shall every one that is holy pray to thee in a seasonable time.*<sup>49</sup>

18. *And yet in a flood of many waters they shall not come nigh unto Him. Unto Him: to whom? Unto God. The Psalmist is wont to vary the grammatical person; in the same way he says: Salvation is of the Lord, and thy blessing is upon thy people.*<sup>50</sup> He has not said: "Salvation is of the Lord, and His blessing is upon His people": nor yet: "O Lord, salvation is from thee, and thy blessing is upon thy people." But whereas he began: *Salvation is of the Lord*, speaking not to Him but about Him, forthwith he turned to Him and said: *And thy blessing is upon thy people*. So in this verse also, when you hear first *to thee*, and then *to Him*, you must not suppose it is some one different; *For this shall every one that is holy pray to thee in a seasonable time. And yet in a flood of many waters they shall not come nigh unto Him*. What is the meaning of *in a flood of many waters*? Those who swim in a flood of many waters do not come nigh unto God. What is this flood of many waters? It means a multiplicity of diverse teachings. Notice, my brethren. The many waters are diverse teachings. God's own teaching is but one; there are not many waters, there is but one water, whether it be the sacrament of baptism or the doctrine of salvation. Concerning this doctrine, with which we are nourished by the Holy Spirit, we are bidden: *Drink water out of thy own vessels and the streams of thy own well.*<sup>51</sup> To

these streams the ungodly have no access, but they who believe *in Him that justifieth the ungodly*<sup>52</sup> are already justified and so draw nigh. Those many other waters, many other teachings, merely defile men's souls, as I have just told you. One such theory says: "My fate drove me to it." Another: "Chance impelled me, Fortune made me do it." If men are at the mercy of chance happenings, something at least is subject to no divine providence; and that is what this teaching amounts to. Somebody else has stated: "There is in opposition a people of darkness, who have rebelled against God, and they make men sin."<sup>53</sup> In this flood of many waters there is no approach to God. What is that true water which flows from the inmost fount of the stream of pure truth? What is this water, brethren, but that which teaches us to give praise to the Lord? What is this water, but that which teaches us: *It is good to give praise to the Lord?*<sup>54</sup> What is this water, but that which teaches us this cry: *I said: I will proclaim against myself my injustice to the Lord; and: I said: O Lord, be thou merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee?*<sup>55</sup> This is the water of the confession of sins, this is the water of humiliation of heart, this is the saving water of life, for him who renounces himself, who puts no trust in himself, and attributes nothing arrogantly to his own powers. This water is to be found in none of the books of strangers, not among the Epicureans, not among the Stoics, not among the Manichees, not among the Platonists. Everywhere indeed are found excellent precepts for manners and discipline, but this particular thing, humility, is not to be found. The course of this humility runs from another starting point: it comes from Christ. This way is from Him, who exalted though He was, came down in lowliness. What else did He teach

by humbling Himself, *becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross?*<sup>56</sup> What else did He teach by paying what He did not owe, in order to set us free from debt? What else did He teach who underwent baptism although He had committed no sin, who endured crucifixion although He had no guilt? What else did He teach but this same humility? Not without reason did He declare: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*<sup>57</sup> By humility, therefore, we are brought near to God, for *the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart.*<sup>58</sup> But yet of those who in the flood of many waters rise up against God and teach insolent iniquity, none shall come nigh unto God.

19. But what about you, who although you have been justified, are yet in the midst of those waters? Yes, my brethren, even whilst we are confessing our sins, those floodwaters are roaring around us in all directions. Although not actually in the deluge, yet the deluge surrounds us. The waters press upon us but do not overwhelm us; they beset us but do not drown us. What are you to do then, since you are in the midst of the flood, treading the path of this world? Can it be that the Psalmist does not hear these teachers, that their proud doctrines do not reach his ears, that their maxims do not inflict on him daily torture of heart? Well, then, what is this man to say when, already justified and trusting in God, he is surrounded with this flood? [V. 7] *Thou art my refuge from the trouble which hath encompassed me.* Let others fly for refuge either to their gods or to their demons,<sup>59</sup> either to confidence in their own powers or to excuses for their sins: for me there is no refuge but thyself in this flood of persecution which has beset me on all sides.

20. *My joy, deliver me.* If you are already rejoicing,

why do you want to be delivered? *My joy, deliver me.* I hear the voice of gladness, crying *My joy*; I hear the groan *Deliver me.* You are rejoicing and groaning in the same breath. "Yes," he replies, "I am both rejoicing and groaning: I am rejoicing in hope, I am groaning because of the present state of things." *My joy, deliver me. Rejoicing in hope,* says the Apostle. Rightly then does the Psalmist say: *My joy, deliver me.* Why *deliver me*? St. Paul goes on to say: *Patient in tribulation.*<sup>60</sup> *My joy, deliver me.* The speaker was already justified and an apostle, and what does he say? *Not only it,* he says, *but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves. Deliver me:* wherefore? *Because we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. Deliver me:* here indeed is the reason: because as yet we wait, groaning within ourselves, for the redemption of our body. Why then the expression *my joy*? At this point the same Apostle continues: *For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, we wait for it with patience.*<sup>61</sup> If you hope, you are rejoicing; if you wait with patience, you are as yet groaning; for where you are suffering no hurt, there is no need for patience. Endurance as it is called, patience as it is called, long-suffering as it is called, forbearance as it is called, exists only amid evils. To be hard pressed implies anguish. Therefore while we are waiting with patience we repeat: *Deliver me from the trouble which hath encompassed me;* but because we are saved by hope, we cry at the same time both *My joy* and *Deliver me.*

21. The answer comes [V. 8] *I will give thee understanding.* The Psalm itself is a Psalm for understanding.



*I will give thee understanding, and I will set<sup>62</sup> thee in this way, in which thou shalt go.* What is the meaning of *I will set thee in this way in which thou shalt go*? Not that you may stick fast there, but that you may not stray from it. I will give you understanding so as always to know yourself and always to rejoice in hope before God; until you reach that homeland where there will be no longer hope but reality. *I will fix my eyes upon thee*: I will not turn away my eyes from you, because you, for your part, will not take your eyes off me.

Now that you are justified, now that your sins are pardoned, raise your eyes towards God. For your heart had grown corrupt whilst it was earthbound. With good reason do you hear *Lift up your heart*, for fear the canker spread. Very well; now lift up your eyes to God at all times, so that He may fix His eyes firmly upon you. But why are you afraid of stumbling while keeping your eyes upon God—afraid that through not looking ahead you fall into some snare? Have no fear; His eyes are there, fixed firmly upon you: *Be not solicitous*,<sup>63</sup> He says. And the Apostle Peter tells us: *Cast all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you*.<sup>64</sup> Therefore *I will fix my eyes upon thee*. So you must lift up your eyes towards Him, and then, as I have said, you will not be afraid of falling into a snare. Listen to these words of the Psalmist: *My eyes are ever towards the Lord*. And, as though he were asked: “What about your feet, while you are not looking straight ahead?”, he says: *For He shall pluck my feet out of the snare*.<sup>65</sup> *I will fix my eyes upon thee*.

22. God has promised both understanding and His own protection to the man who now turns to the haughty who defend their sins, and shows us the meaning of understanding. [V. 9] *Do not become like the horse and the*



*mule, who have no understanding.* The horse and the mule move with necks upreared. They do not resemble that ox which *knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib.*<sup>66</sup> *Do not become like the horse and the mule, who have no understanding.* What, precisely, have these to endure? *With bit and bridle bind fast their jaws who come not near unto thee.* Would you be a horse and a mule, would you have no rider? Your mouth and your jaws shall be bound with a bridle and a bit; that mouth of yours, with which you boast about your merits and keep silence about your sins, shall be bound fast. *Bind fast their jaws who come not near unto thee* by self-humiliation.

23. [V. 10] *Many are the scourges of the sinner.* It is not strange that when the bridle has been put on, the thrashing follows. The beast wanted to remain unbroken, but he is broken in with a bridle and a whip; and heaven grant he really is mastered! For it is to be feared that if he kicks too violently, he may deserve to be left untamed to go his own wandering way, so that it can be said of him: *Their iniquity hath come forth, as it were from fatness,*<sup>67</sup> as it can be said of those whose sins are for the present unpunished. Well, let us hope his whipping will chasten and tame him, for thus the Psalmist declares he himself was subdued. He had called himself a horse and a mule for keeping silence; and how was he tamed? With the rod. *I was turned, he said, in my anguish, whilst the thorn was fastened.* Whether you call it lashes or pricks, God tames the beast He rides; for it is to the beast's benefit to be ridden. God does not mount the beast because He is tired out with going on foot. On the contrary, is there not a depth of mystery in the bringing of the ass-colt to our Lord?<sup>68</sup> A people meek and gentle, praiseworthily bearing the Lord—such is the ass-colt making its way towards

Jerusalem. As another Psalm says: *He will guide the mild in judgment; He will teach the meek His ways.*<sup>69</sup> Who are the meek? Those who do not stiffen their necks against their tamer, but endure the blows and the bridle; afterwards they are so tame that they trot without the whip and keep to the road needing neither bit nor bridle. If you lack this rider, it is you who will come to grief, not He. *Many are the scourges of the sinner; but mercy shall encompass him that hopeth in the Lord.* In what way is He a refuge from trouble? The man who is first beset with affliction will find himself afterwards encompassed with mercy; for He who gave the law will show mercy.<sup>70</sup> He administers the law with stripes, He imparts mercy with consolation. *Mercy shall encompass him that hopeth in the Lord.*

24. What conclusion, then, do we reach? [V. 11] *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye just.* O you who find your joy in your own selves! O you ungodly, you proud, who delight in self, learn now to believe *in Him that justifieth the ungodly*, and your faith shall be reputed to justice.<sup>71</sup> *Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye just. And rejoice:* you must understand, *in the Lord.* Why? Because you are now just. How did you become just? Not by your own merits, but by His grace. How just? Because you have been justified.

25. *And glory, all ye right of heart.* What is the meaning of *right of heart*? Offering no resistance to God. Renew your attention, beloved brethren, and understand this right heart. I am speaking briefly, but very much to the point; please God, what comes at the end will perhaps stay in your minds. Between a right heart and a wrong heart the difference is this. The man who attributes his involuntary sufferings, afflictions, sorrows, labors, humiliations

solely to the just will of God, not charging Him with want of wisdom, as though He did not know what He was doing in punishing one and sparing others, such a man is right of heart. But men are perverse and deformed and crooked of heart when they declare that they are suffering unjustly all the evils they endure, charging with injustice Him through whose will they suffer them; or else, not daring to charge Him with injustice, deny that He actually governs. "For," says such a man, "God cannot commit an injustice. But it is unjust that I should suffer, and So-and-So should not. Granted that I am a sinner, yet undoubtedly there are worse men who are joyful, while I suffer affliction. Very well; since it is a downright injustice that those even worse than myself should be happy and I, who am a just man, or at any rate less of a sinner than So-and-So, should be in trouble; and since this, to my mind, is clearly unjust; and since I am sure that God does not commit injustice; therefore God cannot rule over human affairs nor care anything about us." Thus the perverse of heart, I mean the crooked-hearted, hold three opinions. First, there is no God: *The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God.*<sup>72</sup> There you have the flood I spoke of a little while ago.<sup>73</sup> There has been no lack of such doctrine among philosophers, no dearth of men to assert that there is no God to create and rule all things, but numbers of gods attending to their own affairs apart from the world and taking no heed of what passes below. Therefore either "There is no God," and this is the language of the godless man, who is displeased when something contrary to his own wishes befalls himself and not another man to whom he considers himself superior; or else "God is unjust, since He is content with such things and does them": or else "God does not rule over human affairs; He

cares nothing at all about the whole business.” All three opinions are the height of wickedness, since they either deny God’s existence, or accuse Him of injustice, or deprive Him of the government of the universe. Why all this? Because the man is warped of heart. God is rectitude, and therefore a perverse heart will not conform itself to Him. This finds expression in another Psalm: *How good is God to Israel, to the right of heart!* And because the Psalmist himself had once held such an opinion: *How did God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?* he thereupon added: *But my feet were almost moved.*<sup>74</sup> Just as a warped piece of timber, even if you lay it in a level floor, will not lie flat, or fit in and dovetail properly, but is always rocking and shifting up and down—not because the spot where you have laid it is uneven but because what you have laid there is warped—so likewise, as long as your heart is wicked and warped it cannot come into line with the rectitude of God, nor be laid in place in Him so as to be united to Him, and prove those words true: *He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.*<sup>75</sup> Therefore did the Psalmist say: *Glory, ye right of heart.* How do the right of heart glory? Listen to their glorying: *And not only so*, says the Apostle, *but we glory also in tribulations.* For it is no great matter to glory in joys, to exult in pleasures, but the right of heart also glories in tribulation. And listen to the way he glories in tribulation, for nobody does that uselessly or to no purpose. Behold this upright heart: *Knowing*, he says, *that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope, and hope confoundeth not: because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us.*<sup>76</sup>

26. Such then, brethren, is a right heart. Whatever befalls, let every man cry out: *The Lord gave and the*



*Lord hath taken away.* Here also you have an upright heart: *As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord.*<sup>77</sup> Who took away? What did He take away? From whom did He take it away? When did He take it away? *Blessed be the name of the Lord.* Moreover he did not say: "The Lord gave, the devil has taken away." Notice that, beloved brethren, and never say: "This is the devil's work." Ascribe your chastisement to your God direct, for the devil does nothing to you but what is permitted by Him who wields sovereign power either for punishment or for instruction: for the punishment of the ungodly, for the instruction of a son. For *He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.*<sup>78</sup> You need not hope to escape the rod, unless perhaps you want to be disinherited. *He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.* What, everyone? Where were you trying to hide yourself? Everyone: there is no exception, not one will go without chastisement. What, every single one? Do you wish to hear how far it applies to every single one? Nay, even the Only-Begotten, who was free from sin, was not free from chastisement. Hence the Only-Begotten Himself, bearing your frailty and prefiguring your person in Himself, as the head assumes the personality of its own body, was sorrowful when He drew near to His passion; He was plunged in sorrow by reason of the human nature He bore in order to gladden you, sorrowful in order to comfort you. Undoubtedly our Lord could have been free from sadness as He went forth to face His passion. If the soldier could be, could not his commander in chief? Why do I say the soldier was able to do it? Listen to Paul in his exultation as he approached martyrdom: *I am even now, he says, being sacrificed, and the time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have*



*finished my course, I have kept the faith; as to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me in that day. And not only to me, but to all them that love His coming.*<sup>79</sup> See how he exults as he draws near to martyrdom. He who is to receive a crown rejoices then; but He who is to bestow the crown is sorrowful. What, indeed, was weighing upon Him? The frailty of some of us, who feel sadness when confronted with suffering or death. But see how He leads us towards right ordering of heart. For instance, you wanted to live your life free from all misfortune, but God willed otherwise. Here are two wills; but your will must be brought into line with God's will, not God's will bent to fit yours. Yours is crooked, His is the rule of rectitude; the rule must remain fixed, so that what is crooked may be brought into line with it. Notice how our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us this lesson: *My soul is sorrowful even unto death; and: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.* Here He shows us His human will. But observe His upright heart: *Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt, Father.*<sup>80</sup> Make Him your model then, rejoicing in all that happens to you; and even if the last day should come upon you, rejoice. But if any frailty of the human will should creep in, turn it promptly towards God, so that you may be in the company of those whom the Psalmist bids: *Glory, all ye right of heart.*

#### FIRST DISCOURSE ON PSALM 32

1. [Verse 1] *Rejoice in the Lord, O ye just.* Rejoice, ye just, not in yourselves—to do that would not be safe—but in the Lord. *Praise becometh the upright.* Those praise

the Lord who submit themselves to the Lord; to act otherwise is to be twisted and perverse.

2. [V. 2] *Give praise to the Lord on the harp.* Praise the Lord, presenting your bodies a living sacrifice unto Him.<sup>1</sup> *Sing to Him on a ten-stringed psaltery.*<sup>2</sup> Use your bodily members to serve the love of God and your neighbor, and so observe the three and the seven commandments.

3. [V. 3] *Sing to Him a new canticle.* Hymn a canticle of the grace of faith. *Sing well unto Him in jubilation.* Sing lustily to Him for very joy.

4. [V. 4] *Since the word of the Lord is right.* The word of the Lord is true; it will make you what you cannot become of yourselves. *And all His works are done in faith.*<sup>3</sup> No man should imagine he has attained to faith thanks to his own works, since it is by faith itself that any work is made pleasing to God.

5. [V. 5] *He loveth mercy and judgment.* He loves mercy, which He bestows during this life; and judgment, which makes Him call hereafter for an account of what He has bestowed. *The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord.* Throughout the whole world men receive pardon for their sins by the mercy of our Lord.

6. [V. 6] *By the Word of the Lord the heavens were established.* Not of themselves, but by the Word of the Lord have the upright been strengthened. *And all the power of them by the Spirit of His mouth.* And their faith comes from His holy Spirit.

7. [V. 7] *Gathering together the waters of the sea as into a vessel.* He gathers the people of the world together to make open acknowledgment of their deadly sin, for fear that pride should overflow into license. *Laying up*

*the depths in storehouses.* He stores His hidden secrets in them for their enrichment.

8. [V. 8] *Let all the earth fear the Lord.* Let every sinner fear, and so keep himself from sin. *And let them be in awe of Him.* Neither human threats nor any creature whatsoever, but God alone will inspire with awe *all the inhabitants of the world.*

9. [V. 9] *For He spoke and they were made.* The Maker of the things they presumably fear was not some man or other; it was He who spoke, and lo, they were made. *He commanded and they were created.* He commanded by His Word, and creation came into being.

10. [V. 10] *The Lord bringeth to naught the counsels of nations:* who seek, not His kingdom, but their own empire. *And He rejecteth the devices of people:* of those who look for satisfaction in earthly happiness. *And casteth away the counsels of princes:* of those who seek to be masters of the peoples aforesaid.

11. [V. 11] *But the counsel of the Lord standeth forever.* The counsel of the Lord, which renders a man blessed only in submission to Him, stands fast forever. *The thoughts of His heart unto all ages.* The designs of His wisdom are not subject to change but abide fixed forever and ever.<sup>4</sup>

12. [V. 12] *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.* One nation alone is blessed, that which belongs to the heavenly city and has chosen for its Lord none but its God. *The people whom He hath chosen for His inheritance.* This choice is not of their own doing but is God's gift, in order that He may possess them and not permit them to go wretched and neglected.

13. [V. 13] *The Lord hath looked from heaven: He hath beheld all the sons of men.* From the souls of just

men,<sup>5</sup> our Lord gazes with mercy on all who would be born again to newness of life.<sup>6</sup>

14. [V. 14] *From His habitation which He hath prepared: from the abode which He has prepared for Himself in assuming human nature. He hath looked upon all that dwell on the earth.* He looks with mercy upon all living men to be their master and ruler.

15. [V. 15] *He who hath made the hearts of every one of them.* He has bestowed upon each heart its own spiritual gifts so that the whole body is not the eye, nor is it the hearing,<sup>7</sup> but one in this manner and another in that are incorporated into Christ. *Who understandeth all their works.* He perfectly understands man's every action.

16. [V. 16] *The king is not saved by a great army.* The man who has his nature under control will not win salvation if he prides himself overmuch on his own virtue. *Nor shall the giant be saved by his own strength.* Nor will he be saved who wages war against his unlawful passions, or against the devil and his angels, if he overestimates his own valor.

17. [V. 17] *Deceitful is the horse for safety.* That man is mistaken who imagines either that through human agency alone he will reach the salvation granted to mankind, or that the force of his own impetuosity will rescue him from destruction. *Neither shall he be saved by his own great strength.*

18. [V. 18] *Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear Him.* If you are in search of salvation, behold, our Lord's love overshadows those who fear Him. *On them that hope in His mercy:* who trust, not in their own strength, but in His mercy.

19. [V. 19] *To deliver their souls from death, and feed them in famine.* To give them the food of the word and

of everlasting truth, a food they had forfeited by relying overmuch on their own powers, so that through want of rectitude they could no longer exercise even their natural vigor.

20. [V. 20] *Our soul shall be patient for the Lord.* While it tarries here below, my soul will wait patiently for the Lord so that hereafter it may have its fill of an immortal food. *For He is our helper and protector.* Our helper when we strive after Him; our protector when we face our foe.

21. [V. 21] *For in Him our heart shall rejoice.* Not in ourselves, for lacking Him within we are poor indeed, but in God shall our heart rejoice. *And in His holy name we have trusted.* If therefore we have hoped to come one day into God's presence, it is because during our absence from Him, He has sent us by faith His own name.

22. [V. 22] *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have hoped in thee.* Lord, let thy mercy overshadow us; our hope cannot delude us, because we have put our trust in thee.

## SECOND DISCOURSE ON PSALM 32<sup>1</sup>

1. This Psalm urges us to rejoice in the Lord. It is entitled *For David himself*. All then who form part of David's most holy offspring should listen to his voice, should speak with that voice and should rejoice in the Lord. The Psalm opens thus: [Verse 1] *Rejoice in the Lord, O ye just.* Let the unjust find their joy in this world; the end of the world will spell the end of their exultation. But let the just rejoice in the Lord; since He is everlasting, everlasting too will be their joy. It is, moreover, fitting so to rejoice in the Lord as to praise Him who alone is



in no way offensive to us, whereas nobody else can be so equally offensive to unbelievers. There is a pithy saying: "He pleases God who is pleased with God." Do not dismiss this lightly, dearest brethren. You are aware indeed how many war against God, how many find fault with His acts. When He wills to act contrary to men's will, because He is Lord and knows what He is doing, and looks not to our desire but to our profit, those who prefer the accomplishment of their own will to God's would like to bend God to their will, not subordinate that will to God. To such men as these, unbelievers, impious, evil-doers—loath I am to say it, yet I will say it, because you know I am speaking the truth—a clown makes more appeal than God does.

2. Now we cannot rejoice in the Lord without praising Him, and the more He whom we praise pleases us, the more we are pleasing to Him. Hence after saying: *Rejoice in the Lord, O ye just*, the Psalmist adds: *Praise becometh the upright*. Who are the upright? Those who direct their hearts in accordance with God's will; those whom divine justice comforts when human frailty disquiets; those who, although the personal desire of their human heart is for something in keeping with their immediate plight or their business or their present need, yet when once they understand and realize that God has other plans, prefer the higher will to their own will, the will of the Omnipotent to the will of the impotent, the will of God to the will of man. As far removed as God from man, so far is the will of God from the will of man. When Christ therefore put on human nature and set us a standard, teaching and showing us the way to live, He drew attention to this personal will of man, in which He personified both His own will and ours as well, because He is our Head and

we, as you know, are united to Him as actual bodily members. *My Father*, He said, *if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me*. This was the human will, desiring something personal and private, so to speak. He wanted man, however, to be upright of heart, to adjust whatever was at all crooked according to Him who is ever Rectitude itself; and so, *Nevertheless, Father, not as I will*, He declared, *but as thou wilt*.<sup>2</sup> But what wrong could Christ possibly desire? How, precisely, could His will differ from His Father's? Where there is unity of Godhead, there cannot be a divided will. But in His human nature He was transforming His own into Himself. He had transformed them into Himself when He said: *I was hungry, and you gave me to eat*;<sup>3</sup> He had transformed them into Himself when Saul was raging and persecuting the saints and He cried from heaven, whereas no one was touching Him: *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me*?<sup>4</sup> He now pointed out, as it were, the personal will of man. He pointed you out; and He put you straight. "Come," He says, "look at yourself mirrored in me." For you may want something personal contrary to God's will; I allow this to human frailty, to human imperfection; it would be difficult for you to avoid wanting your own will. But recall at once who it is that reigns over you; He is high above, you are far beneath; He the Creator, you the creature; He the Lord, you the servant; He the Omnipotent, yourself the impotent. Straighten yourself and be conformed to His will, saying: *Nevertheless, Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt*. How should you be separated from God, desiring His will as you now do? Then shall you be upright, and praise will fittingly become you, since *Praise becometh the upright*.

3. If, however, you are all awry, you praise God when

things go well with you and blaspheme Him when they go ill. And yet if the misfortune is just, it is no misfortune; it is just since it is the work of Him who can do nothing unjust. You are like a spoilt child in your father's house: you love your father when he caresses you and hate him when he uses the rod; as if, whether caressing or correcting you, he were not preparing your inheritance. But now notice how praise is seemly to the upright; listen to the voice of an upright man giving praise in another Psalm: *I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall be always in my mouth.*<sup>5</sup> *At all times* is repeated as *always*; and *I will bless* becomes *His praise shall be in my mouth*. At all times and always, whether in prosperity or adversity. For if only in prosperity and not in adversity, how can it be said *at all times*, how *always*? Yes, I have heard a great flow of words like these from many people. When some happiness comes their way, they exult, they rejoice, they sing to God, they hymn God's praises; they are not to be blamed, rather they do well to rejoice; many do not go even so far. But the men who have already begun to praise God on account of their happiness, must be taught to recognize their Father when He strikes them too, taught not to murmur against the hand that corrects them, for fear they deserve to be disinherited for remaining obstinate in their perversity. When they are made upright (What do I mean by upright? When nothing God does displeases them), they are now able to praise God in adversity as well and say: *The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord.*<sup>6</sup> Praise becometh upright men such as these, not those who first of all praise and afterwards abuse.

4. Therefore, ye just and upright, rejoice in the Lord,

for praise becometh you. Let no man say: "Who am I to be called just?", or: "When was I ever just?" Do not be downcast and despair of yourselves. You are men, you are made to the image of God. He who made you men, for your sakes was Himself made man; to ensure your adoption as many sons into an everlasting inheritance, the blood of the Only-Begotten has been shed for you. If in your own reckoning you have held yourselves cheap because of your earthly frailty, now assess yourselves by the price paid for you; meditate, as you should, upon what you eat, what you drink, to what you answer "Amen." Do we remind you of this to make you proud or boldly arrogate any perfection to yourselves? No, but on the other hand you should not think yourselves shorn of all righteousness. Well, I shall not inquire into your righteousness, for possibly none of you would dare to reply: "I am a just man"; but I am inquiring into your faith. As none of you dares to say: "I am a just man," so none of you dares to say: "I am not one of the faithful." I am not yet asking what kind of life you live; I am asking what you believe in. You will answer, you believe in Christ. Have you not heard the Apostle: *The just man liveth by faith?*<sup>8</sup> Your faith is your justice: because if you really believe, you are on your guard; if you are on your guard, you are making an effort; and God is aware of your effort and sees your good will, observes your struggle against the flesh and encourages you to fight; He helps you to prevail, He watches the conflict,<sup>9</sup> He revives your faintness and He crowns your victory. So then, instead of *Rejoice in the Lord, O ye just*, I might say: "Rejoice all ye who believe in the Lord, for the just man liveth by faith." *Praise becometh the upright*. Learn to thank God both in prosperity and adversity. Learn to keep in your



heart what is on every man's tongue: "As God wills." Homely diction oft contains wholesome doctrine. Who in fact does not daily say: "Let God do whatever He wills"? The upright man, then, will stand among those who rejoice in the Lord, those whom praise befits, those accordingly to whom the Psalm addresses the words which follow: [V. 2] *Give praise to the Lord on the harp; sing to Him with the psaltery, the instrument of ten strings.*<sup>10</sup> This is what we were singing just now, lifting up our voice with one accord; this is the lesson we give to your hearts.

5. But the institution of these vigils in Christ's name has caused the banishment of harps from this place, has it not? And yet notice, they are commanded to resound. *Give praise to the Lord*, he says, *on the harp; sing to Him with the psaltery, the instrument of ten strings.* Let nobody's thoughts revert to musical instruments of the theater. The command refers to an inward possession, as is said elsewhere: *In me, O God, are vows, whereby I will render praise to thee.*<sup>11</sup> Those who were present at a previous discourse<sup>12</sup> may remember my explaining then, as well as I could, the difference between a psaltery and harp. I spent some time trying to drive the point home to everyone's mind, but how far I succeeded, only my hearers can tell. It will not be amiss to repeat it here, so that in the distinction between the two musical instruments we may find signified the distinction between human actions which we can bear out in our lives. The harp has a hollow drum-shaped soundboard with a vaulted back of tortoise shell into which the strings are tensed so that they respond when touched.<sup>13</sup> I am not referring to the plectrum which plucks the strings. I mean the concave sound chest upon which they are strung, in which they



are partly embedded, with the result that when they vibrate at the touch, they draw forth tone from the hollow chest and thus greatly increase the resonance. Now the harp's soundboard is below, the psaltery's above. There lies the difference. At this point we are bidden praise on the harp and sing on a ten-stringed psaltery. The Psalmist has not spoken of a ten-stringed harp, either in this Psalm or, unless I am mistaken, anywhere else. The readers among you, dear children, may study and sift the matter more thoroughly at greater leisure; yet as far as I can remember, I have found frequent mention of a ten-stringed psaltery, but in my reading I have never come across a ten-stringed harp.<sup>14</sup> Keep this in mind: the harp's soundboard is below, the psaltery's above. During our lower, that is, our earthly life, we experience prosperity and adversity; it follows that we should praise God in both, so that His praise may be always in our mouth and we may bless the Lord at all times. There is a degree of earthly prosperity and a degree of earthly adversity; God must be praised in both, if we are to play on the harp. What is earthly prosperity? Health of body, an abundance of everything which sustains life, an assured safety, a rich harvest, God's sun that He makes rise upon the good and bad, His rain that falls upon the just and unjust.<sup>15</sup> All these things contribute to earthly life, and whoever does not praise God for them is an ungrateful wretch. Because they are merely earthly, are they therefore not from God? Or are we to imagine them someone else's gift, since they are shared equally with the wicked? Manifold, rather, is God's mercy, patient it is, and long-suffering. He signifies more clearly what He has in store for the good when He shows how much He gives even to the wicked. Yet from the lower element adversities do arise: from the frailty

of humankind, sorrow, sickness, trials, troubles, temptations. The man who would harp should praise God in everything. He should consider, not that they are earthly, but that they can be the rule and ordinance of none but that Wisdom which *reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly*.<sup>16</sup> For He does not look after heavenly things and leave earthly things to look after themselves; otherwise it could not be said to Him: *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art present*.<sup>17</sup> Where, indeed, can He be absent who is everywhere present? Therefore give praise to the Lord upon the harp. If earthly plenty be yours, render thanks to its Giver; if want or if mishap has robbed you of your substance, cheerfully harp. For you are not deprived of the Giver albeit you are deprived of the gift He gave. So I repeat, harp cheerfully. With complete trust in your God, pluck the strings of your heart, and like a harp strongly reverberating in its depths, cry: *The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord*.<sup>18</sup>

6. But when you reflect on God's higher gifts, His prescribed ordinances, the heavenly doctrine He has implanted in you, His injunctions from on high, from His fount of truth, then betake yourself to the psaltery, sing to the Lord on a psaltery of ten strings. For the commandments of the law are ten in number. In the ten commandments of the law—the sum constitutes perfection—you have a psaltery: the love of God contained there in three, the love of one's neighbor in seven. You are well aware, for our Lord has said so, that *on these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the*

*prophets.*<sup>19</sup> God instructs you from heaven that *the Lord thy God is one God.*<sup>20</sup> this forms the one string. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*<sup>21</sup> this forms a second string. *Observe the day of the Sabbath,*<sup>22</sup> not after a sensual fashion, not as the Jews, whose delight it is to spend their leisure in evil pursuits. It would be better for them to spend the livelong day digging than the livelong day dancing. But as your conception of rest is rest in God and as you direct everything to that same rest, refrain from servile work. Now *whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*<sup>23</sup> would I could say the servant of man instead of sin! These three commandments relate to the love of God: reflect on His oneness, His truth, His desirability; for where there is a true sabbath, a true rest, there is delight in the Lord. *Delight in the Lord*, so it is said, *and He will give thee the requests of thy heart.*<sup>24</sup> Who can afford such delight as the Maker of all delights?

These three commandments comprise the love of God; the other seven, the love of one's neighbor: not to do to another what you would not have done to yourself. *Honor thy father and thy mother:* you would be honored by your own children. *Thou shalt not commit adultery:* you would not have your own wife commit it behind your back. *Thou shalt not kill:* neither would you wish to be killed. *Thou shalt not steal:* you would not suffer robbery yourself. *Thou shalt not bear false witness:* you hate any one speaking falsely of you. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife:* you would not like your own to be coveted by another man. *Thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbor's:*<sup>25</sup> if another covets your goods, you are offended. Turn your tongue against yourself as well, when a man hurts and offends you. All these are the

commandments of God, they are the legacy of Wisdom, they speak with a voice from on high. Pluck the psaltery, observe the Law which the Lord thy God came *not to destroy but to fulfil*.<sup>26</sup> Thus you will observe from love what you could not observe from fear. The man who avoids evil from motives of fear, would certainly do it if allowed; therefore, although the opportunity is not granted, his desire holds good. "No, I will not," he says. Why not? "Because I am afraid." You do not yet love justice, you are still a servant: be a son. And yet, a good servant can become a good son. At present, then, refrain from evil-doing out of fear; you will learn later to refrain out of love. There is an undoubted beauty in justice. Possible punishment should deter you. Yes, but justice has a loveliness all its own, it catches the eye, it sets its lovers aflame. For its sake the martyrs trampled on the world and shed their blood. What were they in love with when they renounced all things? For were they not lovers? Or am I telling you this to prevent you from loving? A man without love is stone-cold, stiff and stark. Love, but let it be that beauty which catches the eye of the heart. Love, but let it be that beauty which bespeaks holiness and so sets hearts on fire. Men exclaim, break out on all sides into a cry of "Lovely! Perfect!" What are they looking at? They are looking on the holiness which makes a bent old man beautiful. As a holy old man totters along, there is nothing lovable in his body, and yet everybody loves him. His lovableness is not apparent, or rather it is apparent but to the eyes of the heart. May holiness then delight you; ask our Lord to grant that it may. *For the Lord will give goodness, and our earth shall yield her fruit*,<sup>27</sup> so that you will fulfil from love what is difficult to fulfil from fear alone. What do I mean by difficult? I



mean that the spirit is not yet equal to it; when constrained by fear rather than led by love, it would prefer there were no commandment to observe. Do not steal: fear hell. The man would rather there were no hell in which to be cast. When does he begin to love justice? Surely when he would rather there were no robbery, even though there were no hell to receive robbers. This is what love of justice means.

7. The justice I speak of, what is she like? Who is to describe her? What loveliness belongs to the Wisdom of God? All things that delight the eyes derive their beauty from her; if we are to behold and embrace her, we must cleanse our hearts. We acknowledge ourselves her lovers. She decks us out to make us pleasing in her sight. And when men find fault with us for the behavior which pleases her whom we love, how comes it that we care not a fig for our critics, how is it we scorn them and think them not worth a straw? When women's loose-living and damnable followers are tricked out by their darlings according to their fancy, they care not whom else they offend so long as they charm them; it is quite sufficient if they delight the eyes of their ladyloves. They are nearly always—or rather they are invariably—an offense to serious-minded men and meet with reproof from riper minds. "Your hair needs trimming," a grave elder tells a young ne'er-do-well, "you look a sight walking about in ringlets." But the youth is aware that his locks charm a certain lady; he hates you for your really sensible rebuke and retains the adornment which pleases none but a depraved taste. He dubs you his enemy for wanting to remove his disgrace. He avoids your glance and cares not a rap for the censure of any principle of justice. Well then, if they pay no heed to those who reprove them in truth, prefer-



ring their meretricious elegance, ought we in the things which render us pleasing to the Wisdom of God, ought we to pay any attention to unholy scoffers, who lack the eyes to penetrate to what we love? Think well on all I say and *Give praise to the Lord on the harp*, men upright of heart, *sing to Him with the psaltery, the instrument of ten strings*.

8. [V. 3] *Sing to Him a new canticle*. Have done with the old: you now know the new canticle. The new man, the New Testament, the new canticle. The new canticle does not belong to the old man; none but the new man can learn it, the man who, having once belonged to the Old, is born again by grace and henceforth belongs to the New Testament, which is the kingdom of heaven. Our whole longing yearns after it, singing the new canticle. Let our life, not our tongue, chant this new song. *Sing to Him a new canticle. Sing well unto Him*. Each one will ask how to sing to God. Sing to Him but do not sing out of tune. He does not like His ears wounded. Sing well, brother. Suppose some fine musician is among your audience and you are told: "Sing, to please him"; you feel terrified to sing, being untrained in the art of music, for you may grate upon the artist, because the expert will censure the flaws which pass unnoticed by the unqualified. Well then, who can offer to sing well before a God who is such a judge of the singer, such a critic of every part, such a keen listener? When will you bring the art of singing to such a pitch as not to jar in the slightest upon such perfect hearing? Lo and behold, He sets the tune for you Himself, so to say; do not look for words, as if you could put into words the things that please God.<sup>28</sup> *Sing in jubilation*: singing well to God means, in fact, just this: singing in jubilation. What does singing in jubilation

signify? It is to realize that words cannot communicate the song of the heart. Just so singers in the harvest, or the vineyard, or at some other arduous toil express their rapture to begin with in songs set to words; then as if bursting with a joy so full that they cannot give vent to it in set syllables, they drop actual words and break into the free melody of pure jubilation. The *jubilus* is a melody which conveys that the heart is in travail over something it cannot bring forth in words. And to whom does that jubilation rightly ascend, if not to God the ineffable? Truly is He ineffable whom you cannot tell forth in speech; and if you cannot tell Him forth in speech, yet ought not to remain silent, what else can you do but jubilate? In this way the heart rejoices without words and the boundless expanse of rapture is not circumscribed by syllables. *Sing well unto Him in jubilation.*

9. [V. 4] *For the word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in faith.*<sup>29</sup> Even when He offends the unrighteous, He is right. *And all His works are done in faith.* Your works should be performed with faith, for *the just man liveth by faith,*<sup>30</sup> and *faith worketh by charity.*<sup>31</sup> your works should be performed with faith, because it is by your belief in God that you become faithful. How can God's works be done in faith as though God also lives by faith? God too is faithful, so we find; listen to it not in words of ours but in the Apostle's: *God is faithful*, he says, *who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it.*<sup>32</sup> There you hear God called faithful; listen to this as well: *If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He will also deny us. If we believe not, He continueth faithful, He cannot deny Himself.*<sup>33</sup> So we see that God

also is faithful, but we must clearly distinguish God's faithfulness from man's. A man is faithful by trusting to God's promise; God is faithful by fulfilling His promise to man. We may reckon on a most faithful discharge of His debts, since we are in possession of His most merciful promises. To be sure, we have not advanced Him any loan that we should reckon Him a debtor, since it is from Him we possess whatever we offer Him, and He is the origin of any good that is in us. All the blessings we rejoice in are His gifts. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him, and recompense shall be made him? For of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things.*<sup>34</sup> We, then, have not given Him anything; yet we reckon Him a debtor. How a debtor? Because He is the donor of a pledge. We do not say to God: "Lord, redeem your loan"; we say: "Redeem your pledge." *For the word of the Lord is right.* What does *the word of the Lord is right* mean? He does not delude you, do not you delude Him; or rather do not delude yourself. Who indeed can delude the Omniscient? But *iniquity hath lied to itself.*<sup>35</sup> *For the word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in faith.*

10. [V. 5] *He loveth mercy and judgment.* Because He loves them, you must. Examine this mercy and judgment. Now is the time for mercy; hereafter for judgment. How is it now a time for mercy? God calls those who are turned away from Him, pardons them when they turn towards Him; He has patience with sinners until they are converted, and when converted forgets the past and holds out the future. He animates the halfhearted, strengthens the sorrowful, trains the disciple, helps the warrior to fight. He abandons no one who cries to Him in his strife. He provides the matter for the sacrifice of oblation, the peace

offering is His own gift. Let not this momentous time of mercy slip away, brethren, let it not slip away from us. Judgment is to follow: yes, and remorse as well, but it will then prove unavailing. *They shall say within themselves—at all events the Book of Wisdom<sup>36</sup> says so—repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit: What hath pride profited us? Or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow.* We should say “all things are passing away like a shadow,” here and now. Let us say “All is passing” now while it profits us, for fear we should say “All is past” when it will profit us no longer. The present is therefore the time for mercy; judgment is yet to come.

11. Do not think, for all that, brethren, that these two qualities in God can somehow be severed from each other. They do in fact appear mutually opposed—as if one who is merciful must not uphold strict judgment; as if one who holds fast to judgment must lose sight of mercy. God is almighty; His mercy is not bereft of judgment nor His judgment of mercy. Of a truth He takes pity on us,<sup>37</sup> He considers His own likeness, our frailty, our wandering, our blindness; and He calls us. Those who return to Him, He pardons; those who do not return, He pardons not. Does He show mercy to evildoers? Has He also overlooked judgment, or should He not discriminate between the converted and unconverted? Or do you think it right for converted and unconverted to receive the same treatment? That the same regard be had for both the self-accuser and the liar, the humble and the proud? In His very mercy, then, there is judgment as well. On the other hand, at the judgment He will show mercy, at any rate to those who will be told: *I was hungry, and you gave me to eat.*<sup>38</sup> It is said truly in a certain apostolic Epistle:



*For judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy.*<sup>39</sup> *Blessed are the merciful, He has said, for they shall obtain mercy.*<sup>40</sup> At the judgment, then, there will be mercy, but not without discrimination. If in fact mercy is to be shown, not at haphazard, but to him who has shown mercy, even mercy itself will be just, since it is not shown at random. It is a fact that sins forgiven betoken mercy, and so does the bestowal of life eternal; but notice the equity implied in *Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you.*<sup>41</sup> Yes, *it shall be given to you and you shall be forgiven* denote mercy. Yet if it were separated from judgment, He would not declare: *With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.*<sup>42</sup>

12. You have heard how God exercises mercy and judgment; be you too merciful and just. Or is it possible that they are attributes of God only, and not also of man? If they did not apply to man, our Lord would not say to the Pharisees: *You have left the weightier things of the law, judgment and mercy.*<sup>43</sup> So then, mercy and judgment do apply to you. Do not imagine that mercy may concern you but that judgment is no concern of yours. Suppose one day you are arbitrating in a dispute between two men, the one rich, the other poor. The poor man proves to have a bad case, the rich man a good one. Now if you are not well-instructed in the kingdom of God,<sup>44</sup> you will think you are acting virtuously if, meaning to pity the poor man, you conceal and screen his evil-doing in an effort to vindicate him so that he may appear to be in the right. When reproached for delivering an unfair judgment, you reply on the score of mercy: "Granted, I admit it; but he was a poor man. To show mercy to him was only fair." How was it you upheld mercy to the detriment of judg-



ment? "And how," you answer, "could I uphold judgment without setting aside mercy? Ought I to convict a poor man who had no means of paying, or, if he had, could not have found a living afterwards?" Here is God's answer: *Neither shalt thou favor a poor man in judgment.*<sup>45</sup> It is easy to be warned in the opposite sense not to accept the person of the rich; every one recognizes that—and would that every one did it! This is where a man makes a mistake, if intending to please God he favors the poor in judgment and says to God: "I have been lenient with the poor." Rather should you firmly uphold the two, both mercy and judgment. In the first place, what kind of mercy have you shown towards a man whose evil-doing you have condoned? Why, you have spared his purse and struck at his heart: the poor man aforesaid has remained in his wickedness, and he is the deeper-dyed in so far as he has watched you, a supposedly upright man, condoning his evil deed. He has departed from you unjustly championed, he has yet to meet God's just condemnation. What kind of mercy have you shown him in making him unjust? Indeed, you are proved cruel rather than merciful! "Well, what was I to do?" you ask. You should first judge the case on its merits, convict the poor man, use your influence with the rich man. There is a time for judgment and a time for appeal. When the rich man saw you uphold justice without championing the arrogance of the needy wrongdoer, but justly chastising him as his crime deserved, would he not have inclined towards mercy at your request, gladdened as he was at your verdict?

And now, brethren, although a great part of the Psalm still remains, one must take into account bodily and spiritual capabilities in such a mixed audience. For while

we make our meal of the same wheat, it takes on varied flavors for us, so to speak, to prevent our appetites becoming jaded. This must suffice you for today.

### THIRD DISCOURSE ON PSALM 32<sup>1</sup>

1. To proclaim the word of truth as well as to listen to it is hard work. But it is a labor, brethren, which we endure cheerfully when we remember the Lord's decree and our own circumstances. From the very beginning of our race, and not from a deceitful man, nor from that seducer the devil, but from Truth itself out of the mouth of God man heard the words: *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread.*<sup>2</sup> Thus, if our bread is the word of God, let us exert ourselves in listening, rather than perish from hunger. I expounded a few lines of the earlier part of this Psalm at the solemn vigils lately celebrated; let us listen to the rest today.

2. The remaining part, which we have just chanted, begins at this point: [V. 5, 6] *The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord. By the Word of the Lord the heavens were established.* That is, *By the Lord's Word the heavens were consolidated.*<sup>3</sup> The Psalmist had said previously: *Sing well unto Him with a loud noise.* In other words, sing with a melody surpassing words. *For the word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in faith.*<sup>4</sup> He promises nothing He does not pay: He has become a trustworthy debtor, so you must become a grasping creditor. Then after saying: *All His works are done in faith*, the Psalmist has added the reason: *He loveth mercy and judgment.* For He who loves mercy shows mercy. And if He shows mercy, can He promise and not give, when He could give even though He had not promised? Since,

then, He loves mercy, it behooves Him to show forth what He promises; and since He loves judgment, He must necessarily demand an account of His gifts. For this reason our Lord Himself says to a certain servant: *Thou shouldst have given my money into the bank, and at my coming I might have exacted it with usury.*<sup>5</sup> I recall this so that we may understand what we have just heard. For He says in another passage in the Gospel: *I judge not any man: the word that I have spoken to them, the same shall judge them in the last day.*<sup>6</sup> Let no one who does not want to listen excuse himself for fear something be asked of him. Exactly the same is demanded, even though he refuse to accept what is given. For it is one thing to be unable to accept, and another to be unwilling: in the one case there is the excuse of necessity, in the other a deliberate offence. Therefore *all His works are done in faith; He loveth mercy and judgment.* Welcome mercy and fear judgment, otherwise when He comes to enforce payment from us, He may so enforce it as to send us away empty-handed. He demands His reckoning; if the reckoning is paid, He confers on us eternal life. Accept mercy then, brethren; let us all welcome it. Nobody must be torpid in receiving it, or he may be roughly aroused to repay. Here is mercy for you: thus God cries out to us, just as if in time of famine some one were to say: "Here is corn for you." If in time of famine you heard that, you would be urged by the goad of necessity to run, rushing this way and that to find out how to get what was offered you. And when you found out, how long would you hold back? How much time would you waste? In the same way, you have just been told: "Here is mercy for you." For God *loveth mercy and judgment.* When you have received it, make good use of it, so that when the reckon-

ing comes you may give a good account to Him who advances you mercy beforehand in this time of famine.

3. I will not have you saying to me: "Where shall I get it? Which way shall I go?" Remember what you have chanted: *The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord*. Where is the Gospel not already preached? Where is the Lord's word silent? Where are the limits of salvation? All you have to do is to be ready to receive it; the barns are full. This plenty, this abundance, has not waited for your coming but has come to you of its own accord as you slept. It has not been said: "Let the nations arise and go to one place"; but these truths have been proclaimed to the nations in their own dwelling place, so that the prophecy might be fulfilled: *They shall adore Him, every man from his own place.*<sup>7</sup>

4. *The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord*. What of the heavens? The heavens? Listen. Where there is no misery, they have no need of mercy. On earth man's wretchedness abounds, but the Lord's mercy superabounds: the earth is full of the misery of man, and the earth is also full of the mercy of the Lord. Because the heavens, where there is no misery, do not need mercy, have they therefore no need of the Lord? All things need the Lord, both wretched and prosperous. Without Him the wretched man is not uplifted, the prosperous man is not kept in place. Therefore, in case you should inquire about the heavens, when you hear *The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord*, notice how the heavens also have need of the Lord: *By the Lord's Word the heavens were consolidated*. They were not their own strengthener, nor were these heavens themselves responsible for their own steadfastness. *By the Word of the Lord the heavens were established, and all the power of them by the Spirit of*



*His mouth.* Not that they possessed something of themselves and received, so to speak, their completion from the Lord. For *by the Spirit of His mouth* not part but *all the power of them.*

5. You see then, brethren, the works wrought by the Son and the Holy Spirit are the same. We must not negligently pass this over, for the sake of some men who wrongfully differentiate and others who mischievously confound. Either causes trouble. Some, by making a wrong distinction, confound the creature with the Creator; and whereas the Spirit of God is the Creator, they reckon Him among the things created.<sup>8</sup> They separate and they confound; let them be put to confusion and thus converted. Now consider one and the same work wrought by the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is undoubtedly the Son, just as the Spirit of His mouth is the Holy Spirit. *By the Lord's Word the heavens were consolidated.* What is it to be consolidated, if not to possess firm and stable power? *And by the Spirit of His mouth all the power of them.* It might equally well have been stated thus: "By the Spirit of His mouth the heavens were consolidated, and all the power of them by the Word of the Lord." For *all the power of them* is equivalent to *were consolidated.* This is the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit. I ask, did they act without the Father? Who, pray, works through His Word and His Spirit, but He to whom the Word and the Spirit belong? This Trinity, then, is one God. This God is worshiped by every one who has learnt how to worship; this God encompasses every one who has turned towards Him. Those who are estranged from Him do not seek Him; He recalls them from afar, so that when they have been converted to Him He may fill them.



6. And now, brethren, I leave aside those heavens on high, unknown to us who toil on earth, which we can only seek to investigate by our human conjectures; I shall not occupy myself with those heavens to explain how they are placed one above another, how many they are, or in what manner they are distinguished from one another, with what inhabitants they are peopled, by what ordering they are ruled, in what way one perpetual hymn, resounding from them all, proclaims the praises of God.<sup>9</sup> Much remains for us to discover; we press on, for all that, to arrive there. For there indeed is our homeland, which perhaps we have forgotten through the length of our wanderings. We are listening to our own voice in that Psalm: *Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged!*<sup>10</sup> It is difficult then, if not actually impossible, both for me to explain those heavens and for you to understand. If any one has outstripped me in the understanding of such matters, let him reap the fruit of his superiority and pray for me that I may follow.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, without speaking of those heavens, I have something to speak about in these other heavens which are nearest to us, who are God's holy apostles, the preachers of the word of truth. These heavens have rained upon us so that the growing corn of the Church should spring up and increase; and though for the time being it drinks in the same rain as the cockle, yet the two will not share the same granary.

7. So when you were told: *The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord*, you might perhaps ask: "Whence has the earth been filled with the Lord's mercy?" First the heavens were sent forth to shower the Lord's mercy over the earth, over the whole earth. For notice what is said elsewhere about these same heavens: *The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the*

*work of His hands.* The heavens are the same as the firmament. *Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge.* There is no cessation, no lapse into silence. But where have they proclaimed this, and how far has their word reached? *There are no speeches nor languages where their voices are not heard.* Does not this prediction, however, relate to the fact that they spoke with the tongues of all peoples when assembled in one place?<sup>12</sup> Speaking all men's tongues, they fulfilled the saying: *There are no speeches nor languages where their voices are not heard.* But I ask, how far has this voice in all tongues penetrated, and what regions has it filled? Listen, then, to what follows: *Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*<sup>13</sup> Whose sound, but that of the heavens that *show forth the glory of God*? So if *their sound has gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world*, let Him who sent them forth declare what they were to proclaim to us. He declares it, plainly and faithfully; for He whose works are all done in fidelity foretold future things before they came to pass. For He rose again from the dead, and when He was recognized by His disciples, who had handled His limbs, He said to them: *It behoved Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead the third day, and that penance and remission of sins should be preached in His name.* From what point and to what distance? *Unto all nations*, said He, *beginning at Jerusalem.*<sup>14</sup> What richer mercy, indeed, do we all hope for from the Lord, brethren, than forgiveness of our sins? Since the remission of sins is the Lord's great mercy, then, and the Lord foretold that this remission was to be preached to all nations, *The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord.* What is the earth full of? The Lord's mercy. Why?

Because the Lord forgives sins everywhere, because He has sent forth the heavens to pour down rain upon the earth.

8. And how could those heavens of which we speak have dared to go forth with such confidence to become heavens, frail men as they were, but that *By the Lord's Word the heavens were consolidated*? Whence could sheep have shown such valor among wolves, were not *all the power of them by the Spirit of His mouth*? Behold, He says, *I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves*.<sup>15</sup> O Lord most merciful! Undoubtedly thou dost act thus so that the earth may be filled with thy mercy. If thou art so merciful, then, as to fill the earth with thy mercy, consider whom thou art sending, consider whither thou art sending them. Whither, I repeat, art thou sending them, and whom art thou sending? Sheep into the midst of wolves. Send a wolf, a single wolf into the midst of any number of sheep: who will offer him resistance? What will he not harry, unless perhaps he is quickly gorged? Why, he would gobble up every one of them. Dost thou send forth the feeble into the midst of the fierce? I send them forth, He says, because they have become heavens, to give rain to the earth. By what means have frail men become heavens? Why, *all the power of them by the Spirit of His mouth*. Look, the wolves will lay hold of you, and betray you, and hand you over to the authorities for my name's sake. So now, arm yourselves. With your own strength? Far from it. *Take no thought what to speak, for it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you*.<sup>16</sup> since *all the power of them by the Spirit of His mouth*.

9. So it happened: the apostles were sent forth; they endured afflictions. Have we to bear as much nowadays

in listening to this teaching as they had in propagating it? No. Then will our toil be fruitless, brethren? No. I see you packed tight together; you see me mopping my brow. *If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.*<sup>17</sup> Well then, all this took place. In fact, it is because of the sending of those sheep into the midst of the wolves that we are now keeping sacred the memorials of the martyrs. When the blessed martyr's<sup>18</sup> body was pierced through, this very place was full of wolves: one sheep, taken captive, has overcome all those wolves; slaughtered, one sheep has filled the place with sheep. Then the sea was raging with mighty waves of persecutors. It burst upon the dry land that thirsted for God's heaven.<sup>19</sup> But now, through the sufferings of those who broke the attack, Christ's name is glorified: walking on the crests of the seething floods, He has taken possession even of those very forces. These are accomplished facts. Do you then suppose that when those who do not share our faith witness our assemblies, our celebrations and solemnities, the manifest and public honors done to our God in these days, do you suppose they look on calmly, do you suppose they do not quiver with rage? It is now that the prophecy spoken of them is fulfilled: *The wicked shall see and shall be angry.* What though he be angry? Sheep that you are, do not be afraid of the wolf. No longer need you fear his threats and snarlings. He is angry; and afterwards? *He shall gnash with his teeth and pine away.*<sup>20</sup>

10. Although the briny sea water which remains dares no longer rage against the Christians, yet it still rumbles with a secret suppressed murmur, and the salt water confined within mortal skin foams and frets. Notice what follows: [V. 7] *Gathering together the waters of the sea as in a vessel.*<sup>21</sup> Whereas formerly the sea which raged



with unrestrained turbulence is now mere bitterness shut up within mortal breasts, He who conquered in the apostles, He who then set bounds to the sea, has caused its floods to meet and be broken one against another. He has gathered together the water of the sea as if into a wineskin; a mortal man's skin covers up his bitter thoughts. For those who fear for their skin keep in what they dare not let out. The bitterness is just the same as before; they hate and detest in exactly the same way. But because that which once raged openly now does so in secret, what else am I to say but what has been said: *He shall gnash and pine away?* Then let the Church go forth, let her march ahead; the road is prepared, our highway has been paved by our Commander in chief. Let us be zealous in treading the paths of good works, for that is our manner of marching. And if at any time there comes upon us the distress of trials from unexpected quarters, albeit nowadays the waters are gathered together as if in a wineskin, let us understand that the Lord does this to train us, to shake us out of an overconfident but mistaken security on the score of temporal affairs, and to guide us into His kingdom, once our desire is concentrated upon it. This desire is beaten out into shape with the hammering of tribulations on one side and the other, so that we may make melody like long trumpets in the ears of the Lord. We are invited in the Psalms to praise the Lord with long trumpets.<sup>22</sup> A long trumpet is beaten out with the hammer, just as a Christian heart is drawn out towards God under the blows of afflictions.

11. So even in these days, brethren, now that the water of the sea is gathered together as though in a wineskin, we must remember that God does not lack means of chastising when chastisement is necessary. Hence the



Psalm continues: *Laying up the depths in storehouses*. By God's storehouses the Psalmist means God's hidden knowledge. God knows the hearts of all men, He knows what to bring forth at the right time and whence to bring it forth, He knows how much power to allow the wicked to exercise against the good, in order to condemn the wicked and train the good. He who lays up the depths in storehouses knows how to do all this. May what follows come to pass, then: [V. 8] *Let all the earth fear the Lord*. Presumptuous lightheartedness must not break out rashly into excessive rejoicing and say: "Now that the water of the sea is gathered together as if in a wineskin, who can touch me? Who can dare to hurt me?" Do you not know that the Lord has stored up the depths in cisterns? Do you not know whence your Father can bring forth what is required to chastise you? In truth, He has the treasures of the deep available for your correction, in order to train you for enjoying the treasures of heaven. So now return to His fear, you who were beginning to slip into carelessness. The earth must rejoice, but it must also fear. Rejoice—why? Because the earth is full of the Lord's mercy. Fear—why? Because He has gathered together the waters into a wineskin in such a way as to lay up the depths in storehouses. Thus on the one hand and on the other we shall accomplish what is expressed briefly elsewhere: *Serve ye the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with trembling*.<sup>23</sup>

12. *Let all the earth fear the Lord, and let all the inhabitants of the world be in awe of Him*. Let them not fear another instead of Him: *Let all the inhabitants of the world be in awe of Him*. Is a wild beast raging? Fear God. Is a serpent lying in wait? Fear God. Does some man hate you? Fear God. Is the devil attacking you? Fear God.

For every created thing is subject to Him whom you are bidden to fear. [V. 9] *For He spoke and they were made; He commanded and they were created.* This is how the Psalm goes on. When the Psalmist had said: *And let all the inhabitants of the world be in awe of Him*, in case we should turn round and fear something else, and setting God's fear at naught should fear some created thing instead of Him, worshiping what is made and forsaking its Maker, the Psalmist has confirmed us in the fear of God as if speaking to us and saying: Why fear anything from the heavens, anything from the earth, anything from the ocean? *He spoke and they were made; He commanded and they were created.* When He orders—who spoke and they were made, who commanded and they were created—they are put in motion, when He orders they stay still. Men's ill will can possess the desire to inflict injury but has no power to inflict it unless He enables it. *For there is no power but from God.*<sup>24</sup> that is the Apostle's definite ruling. He did not say: "There is no desire but from God." For there is an evil desire, which is not from God; but because this evil desire in itself does no harm to any one unless God allows its execution, *There is no power*, the Apostle says, *but from God.* Hence the God-man, standing under trial before a human being, declared: *Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above.*<sup>25</sup> The one was passing sentence, the other was giving instruction; even whilst being sentenced, He was teaching, in order one day to pass sentence on those He had instructed. *Thou shouldst not have any power against me*, He said, *unless it were given thee from above.* What does this mean? Has man only no power unless he has received it from above? How could the very devil himself have dared to take so much as a

mere sheep from the holy man Job, without first saying: *Stretch forth thy hand*, that is, "Give me power"? The devil wanted to, but God did not allow him; when the one permitted, the other could act, not because he had power, but because God permitted him. Hence Job, being well instructed, said, as we are continually reminding you,<sup>26</sup> not "The Lord gave and the devil has taken away," but *The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done;*<sup>27</sup> not "As it has pleased the devil." See to it then, my brethren, you who are so laboriously masticating your good and wholesome bread, see that you fear nobody but the Lord. The Scripture tells you to fear none but Him. In like manner let all the earth fear the Lord, who has shut up the depths in His store-houses. *Let all the inhabitants of the world be in awe of Him. For He spoke and they were made; He commanded and they were created.*

13. But now wicked kings have ceased to exist; they have become good ones.<sup>28</sup> They too have received the faith; nowadays they bear on their forehead the sign of Christ's cross, a sign more precious than any jewel in their diadem. Our persecutors have been destroyed. But who has done this? You perhaps, so as to have reason to boast about it? [V. 10] *The Lord bringeth to naught the counsels of nations; and He rejecteth the devices of people and casteth away the counsels of princes.* They said: "Let us make away with them off the earth; if we do that, the name of Christian will cease to be known. They must be killed in this way and tortured in that, such and such punishments must be inflicted on them." Such were the pronouncements made, and amid them all the Church has thriven. *He rejecteth the devices of people and casteth away the counsels of princes.*

14. [V. 11] *But the counsel of the Lord standeth forever: the thoughts of His heart to all generations.* This is a repetition of the same statement. What the Psalmist has first called *the counsel*, he calls later *the thoughts of His heart*; and what he has expressed as *standeth forever*, he repeats as *to all generations*. This repetition is a ratification. But do not suppose, brethren, that because he speaks of *the thoughts of His heart*, God sits down, as it were, and thinks out how to act, and takes counsel whether to do something or to leave it undone. Why, man, that kind of slowness belongs to yourself: His Word runs with all speed. When could there be pause for thought in that Word which is one and embraces all things? But the thoughts of God are formulated at the level of your understanding, so that according to your human nature you may dare to raise up your heart at the sound of words obviously adjusted to your own incapacity: for this matter is beyond you. *The thoughts of His heart to all generations.* What are *the thoughts of His heart*, and what is *the counsel of the Lord* that *standeth forever*? Against what counsel *have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things?*<sup>29</sup> When the Lord rejects the thoughts of the people, He also rejects the counsels of the princes. Then how does the counsel of the Lord remain forever, if not that He has first foreknown and predestined our lot?<sup>30</sup> Can anyone abolish God's predestination? Before the foundation of the world He knew us, He made us, He corrected us, He sent unto us, He redeemed us: this counsel of His stands forever, this thought of His remains to all generations. In times past the nations raged openly, mounting like waves and venting their anger, nowadays they pine away as though shut up and gathered together into a wineskin; then they enjoyed their deeds of violence



unrestrained, now let them enjoy their grim and bitter reflections. When can they destroy His thought that remains forever?

15. But what is this? [V. 12] *Blessed is the nation*. Who would not rouse himself at hearing this? All men love happiness, and therefore men are unreasonable in wanting to be wicked without being unhappy. And whereas unhappiness is the inseparable companion of wickedness, these perverse folk not only want wickedness without unhappiness, which is an impossibility, but they want to be wicked on purpose to avoid being unhappy. What do I mean by saying they want to be wicked on purpose to avoid being unhappy? Consider this point for a moment: in all the wickedness men commit, they always desire happiness.<sup>31</sup> A man steals; you ask: "Why?" For hunger, for need. So he is wicked for fear of being unhappy, and all the more unhappy for being wicked. For the sake of driving away unhappiness and obtaining happiness, all men do whatever they do, good or bad: they invariably, you see, want to be happy. Whether they lead a good life or a bad one, they want to be happy; but not all attain to what all desire. All wish to be happy; none will be so but those who wish to be good. And then, lo and behold, someone or other, although doing wrong, wants to be happy. How? With money, with silver and gold, with estates and farms, with houses and servants, with worldly magnificence, with fleeting and perishable honors. He wishes to find happiness in possessing something; well then, find out what you want to possess to be happy. When you attain to happiness, of course you will be better off than now that you are unhappy. But it is impossible for anything falling short of yourself to add to your happiness. You are a human being; whatever

you covet as a source of happiness is inferior to yourself. Gold and silver and various material things, which you so eagerly long to obtain, to possess, to enjoy, are of less value than yourself. You are more excellent, you are more important; and when you wish to be happy because you are unhappy, undoubtedly you wish to be better off than you are. Certainly it is better to be happy than unhappy. You want to be better off than you are now; yet as means to that end you are seeking and searching for things inferior to yourself. Whatever you possess on earth is inferior to yourself. Every man wishes well to his friend thus, charging him in suchlike terms as these: "I hope you fare better," "I hope to see you better off," "I hope to have the joy of knowing you are better off." What he wishes his friend is what he wants for himself. Now take a piece of trustworthy advice. You want to be better off; I know it, we all know it, we all want the same thing. Look for what is better than yourself, so that by that means you may become better off than you are.

16. Now consider heaven and earth: physical beauty must not so delight you that you want to find your happiness in it. What you are looking for is in the soul.<sup>32</sup> You want to be happy: look for something better than your soul itself. Granted that there are these two things, namely, soul and body, then, since that which is called soul is the nobler of the two, your body can benefit through that which is superior, because the body is subject to the soul. Hence your body can benefit through your soul, so that when your soul is found just, your body also may hereafter become immortal. Through the enlightenment of your soul, your body earns incorruption; thus the nobler restores the integrity of the less noble. Hence if your body's good is your soul because it is superior to your

body, when you seek your own good, seek that which is better for your soul.

Now what is your soul? Pay attention; otherwise perhaps despising your soul and esteeming it some mean and worthless thing, you may be seeking yet more worthless things to make your soul happy. In your soul is the image of God; the human mind contains that image. It received it and by stooping to sin defiled it. He comes to refashion it who had first of all fashioned it; for by the Word all things were made, and by the Word this image was stamped on it. The Word Himself came, so that we might hear from the Apostle: *Be reformed in the newness of your mind.*<sup>33</sup> It now remains for you, then, to seek out what is of better worth than your soul. What will that be, pray, except your God? You can find nothing of more worth than your own soul; for when your nature is perfected it will be equal to the angels. Higher indeed than this there is nothing save the Creator. Stretch upwards towards Him, do not despair, do not say: "It is beyond me." With greater reason is it beyond you to enjoy the gold which you possibly covet. Gold, even though you desire it, you may perhaps never possess; God you will possess as soon as you desire Him. For He came to you before you desired Him; when your will was turned away from Him He called you, when you had turned to Him He put fear into you, and when full of fear you made confession He consoled you. He who has given you all things, He who has brought you into being, He who gives sunlight to your fellow creatures, even to the wicked, who gives rain, fruits and fountains, life and health, and so many comforts—He holds back something for you which He gives only to yourself. What is it that He holds back for you, if not Himself? Look

for anything better if you can find it: God keeps Himself for you. You moneygrubber, why are you gaping after heaven and earth? Better is He who has made heaven and earth: He it is whom you are to behold and possess. Why do you long for such and such a country property to be yours, and say as you pass through it: "Happy the man who owns this!" How many say the same thing in passing through it! But to say so and pass through it, to shake their heads and sigh, is that to possess it? The voice of covetousness is the voice of evil-doing, but thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.<sup>34</sup> Happy is the owner of this property, of that house, of the other field. Curb your crooked dealing and listen to the truth: *Blessed is the nation whose—what?* You know already what I am about to say. So desire to possess it, and then at length you will be blessed. With that alone will you be blessed: through something better than yourselves you will be bettered. The God, I say, who made you, is better than yourself. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.* Make this the object of your love, make it your possession; you will have it as soon as you desire it, you will have it as a free gift.

17. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.* Our God! But whose God is He not? Evidently not all men's in the same way. He is more completely ours, ours since we live by Him as by our bread. Let Him be our inheritance, our possession. Or perhaps we are speaking rashly in claiming God as our own possession, whereas He is our Lord, our Creator? That is no rashness: it is the effect of desire, the sweetness of hope. Let the soul say, and let it say with all confidence: Thou art my God, who sayest to my soul: *I am thy salvation.*<sup>35</sup> Let it say this, and say it with confidence: it will do no wrong in speaking



thus, in fact it will do wrong in keeping silence. Were you in want of trees to make you happy? Listen to the Scripture, describing wisdom: *She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her*. Notice it asserts that wisdom is within our grasp. But in case you should suppose this wisdom is something inferior to yourself, because the Scripture has said it is within your grasp, it proceeds to add: *And to those who lean upon her as upon the Lord, she is sure*.<sup>36</sup> See, your Lord is made your staff, as it were: a man leans upon Him in safety, because He does not yield. Say then with confidence, Wisdom is within your grasp, *to them that lay hold on her*. The Scripture has said so, it has put an end to your uncertainty with the assurance: Speak it forth confidently, love confidently, hope confidently. Make those words of the Psalm yours also: *The Lord is the portion of my inheritance*.<sup>37</sup>

18. Happy, then, shall we be in possessing God. What follows? We are to possess Him; is He not to possess us too? Then why does Isaias say: *O Lord, possess us*?<sup>38</sup> He is the possessor and He is possessed, and it is purely for our benefit. We possess Him to derive our happiness from Him; it is otherwise with God: it is certainly not in order to be made happy that He possesses us. He both possesses and is possessed simply and solely for our happiness. We possess Him, and He possesses us; for we devote ourselves to Him, and He devotes Himself to us. We devote<sup>39</sup> ourselves to Him as our Lord and God, He devotes Himself to us as His own property. That we devote ourselves to Him nobody doubts; whether He devotes Himself to us, who is to prove? He who says: *I am the vine, you the branches; my Father is the husbandman*.<sup>40</sup> Now notice, we find both these things in this Psalm; both are made clear. The Psalmist has already said that we possess God:

*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.* Whose property is this? M's. Whose is that? N's. And this under discussion? Let us discuss the same question with reference to God, let us discuss to whom He belongs. Thus when we inquire about some widespread and very pleasant lands and estates, we are usually told: "A certain senator named So-and-So owns this," and we reply: "He is a lucky man." Similarly we ask: "To whom does this God belong?" A certain nation, blessed that it is, possesses Him; the Lord indeed is their God. And whereas the senator owns his property, but his property does not own him, it is otherwise with this nation's God. Consequently, if we are to belong to Him we must work for it, for there is a mutual possession. You have heard that His nation possesses Him: *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.* Now you shall hear that He also possesses it: *The people whom the Lord hath chosen for His inheritance.* Blessed is the nation in its possession, blessed is the inheritance in its possessor, *the people whom the Lord hath chosen for His inheritance.*

19. [V. 13] *The Lord hath looked from heaven: He hath beheld all the sons of men.* By this expression *all* you must understand all of that nation who come into, or rather who compose, this inheritance. For all are themselves God's inheritance. The Lord has looked down from heaven upon all of them; He who said: *When thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee*<sup>41</sup> has looked upon them. He looked upon that man in that He had mercy on him. Thus very often when begging for mercy we say to a man: "Look at me." And what do you say about one who despises you? "He never looks at me." So there is a way of looking which implies mercy, and of not looking which implies punishment. The look directed towards sins is a chastisement—sins which the Psalmist wished not to be

seen when he said: *Turn away thy face from my sins.*<sup>42</sup> What he wants ignored he does not want recognized: *Turn away thy face*, he says, *from my sins*. But when God turns away His face from your sins, will He take no notice of yourself? Then why does the Psalmist say elsewhere: *Turn not away thy face from me?*<sup>43</sup> So God must turn it away from your sins but not from yourself: He must look upon you, have mercy on you, come to your aid. *The Lord hath looked from heaven: He hath beheld all the sons of men*, who belong to the Son of Man.

20. [V. 14] *From His habitation which He hath prepared*: which He has prepared for Himself. He has looked upon us from the apostles, He has looked upon us from the preachers of the truth, He has looked upon us from the angels whom He has sent us. All these are His house, all these His dwelling place; for all these are the heavens that show forth God's glory. *He hath beheld all the sons of men; from His habitation which He hath prepared, He hath looked upon all that dwell on the earth*. They are His, His very own, they are that blessed nation whose God is the Lord; they are the people whom the Lord hath chosen for His inheritance; for it is spread throughout all lands, not merely in one region. *He hath looked upon all that dwell on the earth*.

21. [V. 15] *He who hath made the hearts of every one of them*. With the hand of His grace, with the hand of His mercy, He has made our hearts, He has molded them, made them one by one, giving each of us a heart apiece, yet so as not to destroy unity. As our members, all fashioned singly, have each their own distinctive work to do, and yet live in the unity of the body—the hand does what the eye does not, the ear can perform what neither eye nor hand can, yet all work in concord, hand, eye

and ear fulfilling various functions but not opposing one another—so in Christ's Body individual human beings, like individual bodily members, rejoice each in his own gifts, because He who has chosen the people as His inheritance has made the hearts of every one of them. *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all doctors? Have all the grace of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? To one indeed, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith in the same Spirit, to another the grace of healing.*<sup>44</sup> Why? Because *He hath made the hearts of every one of them.* For as our bodily members perform various duties, yet enjoy but one state of general health, so among the members of Christ there are various gifts, yet but one state of charity. *He who hath made the hearts of every one of them.*

22. *Who understandeth all their works.* What is the meaning of *understandeth*? He sees secretly and from within. You find in the Psalm: *Understand my cry.*<sup>45</sup> There is no need of any mode of expression, for things to reach God's ears. His inward vision is termed understanding. The Psalmist has spoken more emphatically than if he had said: "He sees all their works"; for then you might suppose that in seeing a man's work you saw everything. One man sees another man's deed by his bodily act, but God sees into his heart. Hence, because he sees within, it is said: *He understandeth all their works.* Two men give an alms to the poor: the one is seeking a heavenly reward for himself, the other the praise of men; you see both doing the same thing, but God understands two different things. He sees what is within and takes cognizance of what is within. He sees the aims of both, He



beholds their actual intentions, *who understandeth all their works.*

23. [V. 16] *The king is not saved by a great army.* All men must live to our Lord, all live in God.<sup>46</sup> Let God be your hope, God your endurance, God your strength, let Him be your propitiation, Him your praise, let Him be your end and resting place, Him your help in labor. Listen to the truth: *The king is not saved by a great army, nor shall the giant be saved by his own great strength.* The giant is the arrogant man who lifts himself up against God, as though he were something in himself and of himself. It is not by his own great strength that such a man will be saved.

24. But now, he has a fine horse, strong, sound and swift; if any attack comes, can he not promptly get his rider out of danger? Illusion! Let him but listen to what follows: *Deceitful is the horse for safety.*<sup>47</sup> Have you grasped the meaning of the sentence: *Deceitful is the horse for safety?* Your horse must not promise you safety: if he does promise it, he will betray the promise. If it is God's will, you will be delivered; if it is not, your horse will fall and you will fall from above him. And do not suppose that *Deceitful is the horse for safety* means that a just man is deceitful for safety because just men, so-called, practise lying to secure safety. The word written is not *aequus*, a just man, derived from "equity," but *equus*, a horse, the four-footed animal. This is shown by the Greek text.<sup>48</sup> Men who seek occasions of lying for their own advantage are convicted of being but sorry steeds, for the Scripture says: *The mouth that believeth, killeth the soul,*<sup>49</sup> and: *Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie.*<sup>50</sup> Then what is the meaning of *Deceitful is the horse for safety?* The horse deceives you when

he promises you safety. Now, does a horse ever speak to anybody and promise safety? But when you see a well-built horse, strong and fleet-footed, all these good points seem to promise that he will bring you through safely; but unless God protects you they are all in vain, for *Deceitful is the horse for safety*. You can also take the horse figuratively as any wealth of this world, any kind of honor on which you mount in pride; the higher you rise, the safer—and not merely the more elevated—do you mistakenly suppose yourself. You do not realize with what violence you will be thrown; the higher your seat, the heavier your fall. *Deceitful is the horse for safety; neither shall he be saved by the abundance of his strength*. Whence then shall a man obtain safety? Not from strength, not from power, not from honor or glory, not from a horse. Whence then? Where am I to go? Where am I to find means of safety? You need not search long or far afield. [V. 18] *Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear Him*. Those, you see, are the same men He has looked upon from His habitation. *Behold the eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear Him, that hope in His mercy*: not in their own merits, not in their strength or endurance, not in a horse, but in His mercy.

25. [V. 19] *To deliver their souls from death*. He promises life everlasting. But during this our wayfaring, does He forsake us? See what follows: *And feed them in famine*. The time of famine is here and now, the time of plenty will be hereafter. Since He does not forsake us in the famine of this corruptible life, how He will content us when we have become immortal! But as long as the season of famine lasts, we must endure, we must hold out, we must persevere to the end. We must go through with everything, for the course is clear, but we

must not forget our natural handicap.<sup>51</sup> Even at this moment the onlookers in the amphitheater are probably behaving like madmen and sitting in the sun; and though we are standing, at least we are in the shade and looking upon something more beautiful and better worth while. Let us look upon beautiful things and be looked upon by the All-Beautiful. Let us mentally look upon what is told us in explanation of the divine Scriptures and rejoice in such a sight. But who is it that looks on at us? *Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear Him: on them that hope in His mercy, to deliver their souls from death and feed them in famine.*

26. However, in order to support our exile, as long as we suffer famine and look for refreshment on the way to save us from fainting, what is enjoined upon us, or what ought to be our attitude? [V. 20] *Our soul shall be patient towards the Lord.*<sup>52</sup> It will confidently wait for Him who mercifully promises, and mercifully and truly fulfils His promise; but until He fulfils it, what are we to do? *Our soul shall be patient towards the Lord.* What if we do not remain firm in that patience? Indeed, we certainly will: *For He is our helper and protector.* He strengthens in the fight, He shelters from the heat, He does not forsake you; endure, hold on. *He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.*<sup>53</sup>

27. And what when you have waited a very long time, when you have suffered in patience, when you have gone on to the very end, what will you receive? For what reward are you practising endurance? To what purpose are you suffering such hardships so long together? [V. 21] *For in Him our heart shall rejoice, and in His holy Name we have trusted.* Hope here, that you may

rejoice hereafter; hunger and thirst here, that you may feast hereafter.

28. The Psalmist has made all these exhortations, he has filled us with the joy of hope, he has set before us what we are to love, and in whom alone and from whom alone we are to trust for everything. After this comes the short and salutary prayer: [V. 22] *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us.* Upon what grounds? *As we have hoped in thee.* I have wearied some of you; I know it. For others, again, I have come overspeedily to the end of my discourse; I know that too. The weak must forgive the stronger, and the stronger pray for the weak. Let us all be members of one Body, animated by our Head: in Him is our hope, in Him is our strength. Let us not hesitate to demand mercy by force from the Lord our God; He has an absolute wish to be forced. He will not be troubled when we press Him, nor distressed in any way, like one you ask for something he does not possess, or something of which he has very little and is afraid to part with for fear he should run short. Would you know in what measure God will dispense mercy to you? Do you dispense charity: let us see if it runs out while you do so. What bounty there will be in the Most High Himself, if there can be so much in His image!

29. Therefore, brethren, I exhort you most earnestly to practise such charity, not only among yourselves, but also towards those who are without, whether they be still pagans, not yet believing in Christ, or whether they be separated from us, acknowledging the same Head as ourselves and separated from our Body. Let us mourn for them, brethren, as our brothers.<sup>54</sup> Willy-nilly, they are our brethren. Then only do they cease to be our brethren when they cease to say *Our Father*.<sup>55</sup> The



prophet said of certain people: *To those who say to you: Ye are not our brethren, say ye: Ye are our brethren.*<sup>56</sup> Look round and see of whom he could have spoken thus: was it the pagans? No, for according to the Scriptures and ecclesiastical usage we do not call them our brethren. Was it of the Jews who did not believe in Christ? Consult the Apostle, and you will see that when he speaks of brethren without any qualification, he means to refer only to Christians: *For a brother or sister, says he, is not under servitude in such cases:*<sup>57</sup> in speaking of matrimony, he has given the title of brother and sister to a Christian man and woman. Again he says: *But thou, why judgest thou thy brother, or thou, why dost thou despise thy brother?*<sup>58</sup> And in another place, *But you do wrong and defraud, he says, and that to your brethren.*<sup>59</sup> Hence those who tell us: "You are not our brethren," call us pagans. For that reason indeed they want to rebaptize us, saying that we do not possess what they give. From this follows their error in denying that we are their brethren. But why did the prophet tell us: *Say ye to them: Ye are our brethren,* if not because we recognize they have something we do not repeat? They, by refusing to recognize our baptism, deny that we are their brethren; we, on the other hand, by not repeating theirs but recognizing it for our own, say to them: *Ye are our brethren.* They may say: "Why are you looking for us, what do you want with us?" Let us reply: *Ye are our brethren.* They may say: "Go away, we have no connection with you." But we have an undoubted connection with you: we make confession of one and the same Christ, we ought to be in one Body, under one Head. "Why are you seeking me," he asks, "if I am lost?" Gross absurdity, gross madness! Why are you seeking me, if I am lost? Why should I seek

you, except because you are lost? "Well then, if I am lost," says he, "how am I your brother?" Exactly as I may be told of you: *Thy brother was dead, and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found.*<sup>60</sup> I adjure you, therefore, brethren, through the very heart of charity, by whose milk we are nourished, by whose bread we are strengthened, through Christ our Lord, through His meekness—for it is time for us to pour forth upon them great charity and abundant mercy, beseeching God on their behalf that now at last He may give them sound understanding, to come to their senses again and see themselves, and realize that they have no argument whatsoever against the truth; nothing is left to them but sickly spite, all the more feeble in proportion as it fancies itself formidable. I adjure you on behalf of the weak, of those who mind earthly things, of the brutish and carnal-minded, who are yet our brethren, who celebrate the same holy mysteries, identical though not in our company; who make answer with the same Amen, identical though not in our company: pour forth to God the quintessence of your charity on their behalf. I have indeed done something for their welfare in the council, which time does not allow me to explain to you today. Hence I exhort you to assemble more promptly and in larger numbers, and I count on you to warn the brethren who are not here present to assemble tomorrow at the Church of the Tricliae.<sup>61</sup>

### FIRST DISCOURSE ON PSALM 33

1. This Psalm obviously has nothing in its text which is obscure or needs an interpreter; yet its title puts us on the alert and calls for further inquiry. But as it is here

written that the man who hopes in God is blessed, let us all hope that He will open to us when we knock, for He would not encourage us to knock if He were unwilling to open to our knocking.<sup>1</sup> If, as once happened, a man who intended to keep the door shut was driven in vexation at the rapping to rise up in spite of himself and open the door to avoid further annoyance, how much more ought we to trust that He who said *Knock, and it shall be opened to you*<sup>2</sup> will open the door at once? I am knocking, then, in the earnestness of my heart at the door of our Lord God, that He may deign to unveil this mystery; knock with me, beloved brethren, by the intensity of your listening and your humble prayer on my behalf. It is certainly, I must confess, a great and hidden mystery.

2. The title of the Psalm runs as follows: *A Psalm of David, when he changed his countenance before Abimelech,<sup>3</sup> and he dismissed him, and he went his way.* We search all through the exploits recorded for us in the Scriptures concerning David, to ascertain when this happened, as we do when we meet the title of another Psalm: *When David fled from the face of his son Absalom.*<sup>4</sup> We thereupon turn to the Books of Kingdoms<sup>5</sup> and discover when it was that David fled from the face of his son Absalom:<sup>6</sup> that this really happened is strictly true, and because it really happened, it was recorded. Although the title of the Psalm, then, conceals something mysterious, yet it has been drawn from actual history. So also I believe that this inscription *When he changed his countenance before Abimelech, and he dismissed him, and he went his way* is chronicled in the Books of Kingdoms, where everything relating to David's actions is set forth. We do not however find the incident, and yet we do

find one from which this would seem to be derived. For it records how David, in fleeing from Saul his persecutor, betook himself to Achis, King of Geth, to the king, that is to say, of a race bordering upon the Jewish kingdom, where he lay in hiding to escape Saul's pursuit. He was fresh from winning the laurels which had earned him envy in return for his service. He had slain Goliath and in a single combat had gained glory and a secure government for both king and people. Whereas when Goliath jeered Saul quaked, when once Goliath lay prone he showed himself a foe to the man by whose hand he had cut his enemy down. He envied David's renown, mainly because the people in their rejoicings and the women in their dances lauded David's glory. Saul, they said, had slain his thousands and David his ten thousands. Irritated that a stripling had entered in a single fight upon a glory surpassing his own, that in everyone's praise he took precedence of the king, Saul, as the venom of ill will and worldly pride is wont to do, began to envy and persecute him. Then it was that David, as I have related, betook himself to the King of Geth, Achis by name. This same king was reminded, however, that he was sheltering the man who had begun to enjoy great renown among the Jewish people, and he was asked: *Is not this David, to whom the women of Israel sang in their dances, saying: Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?* Yet if by reason of this renown Saul had begun to envy him, had not David cause for fear that the very king to whom he had fled would also want to crush the man he might possibly face as an enemy on his borders, if he preserved him unharmed? *He feared him*, so it is written, *and he changed his countenance before them, and affected, and drummed against the doors of the city, and was car-*



ried in his own hands,<sup>7</sup> and he fell down at the doors of the gate, and his spittle ran down upon his beard. The king, in whose house he was hiding, saw him. *Why have you brought this mad fellow to me?* he asked his men. *Shall he come into my house?* So it was that he cast him out and let him go, and David, under cover of madness, departed from the place unharmed.<sup>8</sup> With regard, then, to the mock madness, what is here written: *A Psalm of David, when he changed his countenance before Abimelech, and he dismissed him, and he went his way*, would seem to point to this incident. But the man was Achis, not Abimelech. In the name alone, in fact, there seems to be a discrepancy, for the incident is related almost word for word in the Psalms as it is recorded in the Book of Kingdoms. The alteration of the name, therefore, should spur us on the more to search out its hidden meaning. For however it came about, it was not done without a reason: it was done because it signified something. Nor has the changed name been recorded unintentionally.

3. You realize, brethren, the depth of these mysteries. If there is no mystery in Goliath's being slain by a stripling, then there is no mystery in the latter's changing his features and counterfeiting madness, in his drumming, and falling down at the doors of the city and the doors of the gate, in the spittle that ran down upon his beard. How should it be devoid of meaning, when in fact the Apostle tells us openly: *Now all these things happened to them in figure, and they are written for our sake, upon whom the end of the world is come?*<sup>9</sup> If the manna of which the Apostle says: *And they did eat spiritual food*,<sup>10</sup> signifies nothing; if it signifies nothing that the waters were divided and the people led through the midst thereof to escape Pharaoh's pursuit, as the Apostle relates: *For I*

would not have you ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud. And all in Moses were baptized, in the cloud and in the sea; if it signifies nothing that when the rock was struck, water gushed forth, and the rock, the Apostle tells us, *was Christ*; well then, if they all signify nothing, facts though they be; if, finally, it signifies nothing that Abraham's two sons were born according to the human mode of birth and yet the Apostle terms these two sons the two Testaments, the Old and the New: *For these are the two testaments: which things are said by an allegory*;<sup>11</sup> if all these events, which the words of the Apostle assure you took place as symbolical of things to come, signify nothing, then we are free to think that the incident I have just related to you from the Book of Kingdoms concerning David signifies nothing as well. I say then that not for nothing was the name altered, not for nothing does it say *before Abimelech*.

4. Join me in the scrutiny. For all I have said so far makes up the hand of the knocker, so to say; the door is not yet opened. To expound such matters is to knock; and for you to listen to them is to knock. Let us go on knocking by prayer that our Lord may open to us. We possess the interpretation of Hebrew names; we are not without scholars to translate the names for us from Hebrew to Greek, and from Greek into Latin. Well then, upon consulting these names, we find Abimelech interpreted, "the kingdom of my Father"; and Achis, "How can that be?" Let us examine these names, for now the door is beginning to open to our knocking. If you ask: "What does Achis mean?", "How can that be?" is the reply. "How can that be?" is the expression of one in wonderment who does not as yet understand. Abimelech, "the kingdom of my Father"; David, "strong in hand." David is

the type of Christ as Goliath of the devil, and in David's striking of Goliath, Christ destroys the devil. But what does "Christ destroys the devil" mean? Humility destroys pride. Consequently to pronounce Christ's name, my brethren, is principally to preach humility. For He traced a path for us by humility: since we had strayed from God through pride, we could return to Him only through humility, and we were without a model to imitate. Men, wretched mortals, were all swollen with pride. And if among them any rose up humble of soul, as did the prophets and patriarchs, the human race scorned to copy them in their humility. But in order that man might no longer refuse to imitate the humility of another man, God became humble, that thus perhaps mankind's pride might not disdain to follow in the footsteps of God.

5. In times past, as you know, the sacrifice of the Jews according to Aaron's priesthood consisted in victims of cattle. All that is figurative. The sacrifice of our Lord's body and blood, which the faithful understand and those who have read the Gospel, did not as yet exist, that sacrifice which now overspreads the whole earth. Picture to yourselves, then, the two sacrifices: the one, according to the order of Aaron; the other, according to the order of Melchisedech. Now it is written: *The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent: thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.*<sup>12</sup> Of whom does the Psalmist say: *Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech?* Of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who was Melchisedech? The King of Salem. In ancient days Salem was a city, which in later times, so scholars have recorded, was called Jerusalem. Before the Jews ruled there, then, it was the domain of this priest Melchisedech, called in Genesis *the priest of the most high God.*<sup>13</sup> He

met Abraham, who had just delivered Lot out of the hands of his pursuers, after defeating the men who held him captive and setting his brother free: after his brother's deliverance, Melchisedech went to meet him. Such was the dignity of Melchisedech that Abraham received his blessing. He brought forth bread and wine, and blessed Abraham, and Abraham paid him tithes. Notice what he brought forth, and whom he blessed. The words *Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech* were said later. David spoke these words in the Spirit long after Abraham, yet it was in the days of Abraham that Melchisedech lived. In *Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech*, to whom else does he refer but to Christ with whose sacrifice you are all familiar?

6. Aaron's sacrifice, then, was done away with, and the sacrifice according to the order of Melchisedech came into being. But to resume, someone or other *changed his countenance*. Who is this someone? I should not say "someone or other": our Lord Jesus Christ is surely well known. In His own body and blood He willed to establish our health and salvation.<sup>14</sup> How came He to commit to us His body and blood?<sup>15</sup> Out of His humility. But for His abasement, He could have been neither food nor drink. Gaze up at His sublimity: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*<sup>16</sup> You have here the eternal food: but it is food which the angels eat, the hosts on high eat, the heavenly spirits eat; they eat and are filled, while the food which satisfies and gladdens them remains entire. But what man could be capable of that food? How render man's heart duly fit for such food? Such a repast must needs be converted into milk to reach those who are but children.



But now how does food become milk? How is food transformed into milk except by passing through flesh? This is what a mother does. What she eats, the babe eats; but since the child is unfit to take bread, the mother makes the bread flesh. And so, by the lowly act of suckling and the flow of her milk, she feeds her child on that very bread. How then did the Wisdom of God nourish us on that bread of His? *Because the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*<sup>17</sup> Behold His humility, I say: the bread of angels has become man's food. *He gave them the bread of heaven*, it is written, *man ate the bread of angels.*<sup>18</sup> The Word, that is, whereon the angels feast, who is eternal and equal with the Father, seeing that *being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God*—that Word man has eaten. He is the food of the angels, *but He emptied Himself* so that man might eat the bread of angels, *taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross,*<sup>19</sup> in order from now onwards to set before us from the cross the flesh and blood of our Lord, the New Sacrifice. That is why *he changed his face before Abimelech*, or before the kingdom of His Father. Now the kingdom of His Father was the kingdom of the Jews. How is it His Father's kingdom? It is David's kingdom and Abraham's kingdom. I grant that the kingdom of God the Father is the Church rather than the Jewish race, yet the Israelites formed the Father's kingdom according to the flesh. It was said for instance: *And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father.*<sup>20</sup> It is thus pointed out that, according to the flesh, our Lord's father is David; according to the divinity, however, Christ was

not David's son but David's Lord. The Jews indeed knew Christ according to the flesh, but of Christ according to His divinity they had no knowledge. Consequently He put the question to them: *What think you of Christ: whose Son is He?* They answered: *The Son of David.* He saith to them: *How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying: "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit on my right hand, until I place all thine enemies under thy feet"?* If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son? And they were not able to answer Him,<sup>21</sup> because they saw in Christ our Lord only what was visible to the eye, and not what was to be realized by the heart. Yet had they possessed eyes in their soul as well as eyes in their head, with their bodily eyes they would have recognized David's Son; with the eyes of their soul, David's Lord.

7. *Therefore he changed his countenance before Abimelech.* What does *before Abimelech* mean? Before the kingdom of His Father. And what, the kingdom of His Father? Before the Jews. *And he dismissed him and he went his way.* Whom did He dismiss? Why, He dismissed the people of the Jews, and He went His way. Search for Christ today among the Jews: you will not find Him. Why has He dismissed them and gone His way? Because He has *changed his face*. For the Jews clung to the sacrifice according to the order of Aaron and did not accept the sacrifice according to the order of Melchisedech;<sup>22</sup> so they lost Christ, and the Gentiles, to whom He had sent no heralds beforehand, entered into possession of Him. He had certainly sent heralds to the Jews: David himself, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Isaias, Jeremias, all the rest of the prophets had He sent. A few took their lesson to heart, but they were a handful

compared with those who chose to perish; for the latter were a multitude. We read that they were thousands in fact. *A remnant*, it is written, *shall be saved*.<sup>23</sup> But you may look nowadays for Christians who are circumcised without finding any, yet when the faith was new, circumcision furnished many thousands of Christians. You will search for them now in vain. And rightly so, for *he changed his countenance before Abimelech, and he dismissed him, and he went his way*. Now it was before Achis he changed his features, and he dismissed him, and he went his way. Clearly then, the names have been changed in order that the alteration might make us alive to the significance of the mystery. Otherwise we might imagine that nothing is related or chronicled in the Scriptures of the Psalms except the events found in the Books of Kingdoms, and so we should fail to look there for symbols of things to come, regarding them merely as past history. When the names are changed, therefore, what warning are you given? There is a mystery locked up here: knock. Do not stick fast in the letter, for the letter killeth; but aspire after the spirit, for the spirit quickeneth.<sup>24</sup> Spiritual understanding is salvation to the true believer.

8. Now notice, brethren, how he dismissed King Achis. I have told you that Achis is interpreted "How can that be?" Recall the Gospel. When our Lord Jesus Christ was speaking of His body, He said: *Except a man eat my flesh and drink my blood, he shall not have life in him. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed*.<sup>25</sup> Thereupon His disciples who were following Him were seized with terror, utterly horrified at His statement. In their lack of understanding, they thought our Lord Jesus Christ's words unspeakably difficult—they were to eat that flesh of His which met their

eye, and drink His blood! They could not endure it, exclaiming in so many words: "How can that be?" For King Achis is the personification of error, ignorance and stupidity. Obviously whoever asks: "How can that be?" does not understand; where there is no understanding, there are dark clouds of ignorance. They were under the reign, therefore, of the kingdom of ignorance, or of King Achis; that is, the kingdom of error held dominion over them. Nevertheless our Lord said: *Except a man eat my flesh and drink my blood*. But He had changed His features, and it appeared raving madness for Him to give men His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. Similarly David was regarded as mad, and Achis himself cried out: "This is a raving madman you have brought to me." Eat my flesh and drink my blood—does not this sound like madness? And in saying *Except a man eat my flesh and drink my blood, he shall not have life in him*, our Lord appears to be beside Himself. But it is to King Achis He appears mad—to the foolish, that is, and the ignorant. Consequently He dismissed them and went His way. Understanding vanished from their hearts so that they could not grasp His meaning. And what did they say? They virtually said: "How can that be?"—which is the interpretation of Achis. They actually said: *How can this man give us His flesh to eat?*<sup>26</sup> They considered our Lord a mad fellow, He did not know what He was saying, He was out of His mind. But He who was perfectly aware of what He was saying when He changed His features and counterfeited raving lunacy, was proclaiming beforehand His sacred mysteries, and affecting and drumming against the doors of the city.

9. Now we must find out what He meant by affecting and drumming. Not without reason is it said: *He fell*



*down at the doors of the gate; and not without reason: And his spittle ran down upon his beard.* These words serve a purpose. If comprehension is our reward, we ought not to find a long explanation tedious. You are aware, brethren, that those Jews in whose presence He changed his features, whom He dismissed when He went His way, rest on this day. If the men who have lost Christ, since He has dismissed them and gone His way, take an unprofitable rest, we take a fruitful one trying to understand the Christ who has dismissed them in order to come to us. None of this was done without design; nor was that told us of David's madness: *He affected, and drummed against the doors of the city, and was carried in his own hands, and he fell down at the doors of the gate, and his spittle ran down upon his beard.*

*He affected:* what does *he affected* denote? He felt affection. What does feeling affection imply? That He took compassion on our infirmities, and therefore He willed to clothe Himself in our flesh, and in flesh to destroy death. Taking compassion on us is here called affecting. So it is that the Apostle rebukes those who are hardhearted and devoid of affection. He reproves certain men for being, so he says, *without affection, without mercy.*<sup>27</sup> Where there is affection, there is mercy. Where is mercy? Mercy has descended upon us from on high. If our Lord had refused to empty Himself, if He had remained in that form in which He, the Eternal, was equal to the Father, we had remained evermore in death. To free us, however, from the unending death to which the sin of pride had brought us, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.<sup>28</sup> *He affected* therefore, forasmuch as He went to the limit even of death on the cross. But

when a man is crucified, he is stretched across wood, and to make a drum, flesh, that is, hide, is stretched across wood; that is why it says: *he drummed*; in other words, He was crucified, He was stretched across wood.<sup>29</sup> *He affected*, yes, He showed so much affection for us as to lay down His life for His sheep.<sup>30</sup>

He drummed. How? *Against the doors of the city*: that door which is opened to us that we may believe in God. We had shut the door against Christ to open it to the devil. We had barred our hearts against life eternal. But because, men that we are, we had hearts closed against life eternal and were unable to behold the Word whom angels behold, He, the Lord our God, opened the hearts of mortal men by the cross. He drummed, that is to say, against the doors of the city.

10. *And was carried in his own hands*. Who can explain, brethren, how this could possibly happen where man is concerned? Who can be carried in his own hands? A man can be carried in the hands of others, but in his own, never. In what sense it is to be understood literally of David we are not told, but we are told how Christ did it. Christ was literally carried in His own hands when He set before us His own body with the words: *This is my body*.<sup>31</sup> Obviously He was carrying that body<sup>32</sup> in His own hands. Such is the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ, the humility so deeply impressed upon men. He urges us, brethren, to live according to it; namely, to imitate His humility, to lay Goliath low and by clinging fast to Christ, to conquer pride. *He fell down at the doors of the gate*. *He fell down*—what does that signify? He abased Himself to the depth of humility. And—*at the doors of the gate*? At the entrance of faith, whereby we are saved. For no man can begin except from

the beginning of faith, as it says in the Canticle of Canticles: *Thou shalt come, and thou shalt pass through from the beginning of faith.*<sup>33</sup> We are to meet face to face, as it is written: *Dearly beloved, we are the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is.*<sup>34</sup> *We shall see Him.* But when? When these things are passed away. Listen also to the Apostle Paul: *We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face.*<sup>35</sup> Well then, before we see the Word face to face as the angels see Him, we need yet awhile the doors of the gate at which our Lord fell down, humbling Himself even unto death.

11. What does *his spittle ran down upon his beard* denote? It was at this point that He *changed his countenance before Abimelech, or Achis, and he dismissed him, and he went his way.* He dismissed those who did not understand. To whom did He turn? To the Gentiles. Now let us grasp what they could not. David's spittle ran down upon his beard. What does *spittle* symbolize? An infant's babbling, so to speak, for babes slobber. Did this not sound like childish babbling: *Eat my flesh and drink my blood?* But such childish babbling cloaked His strength. The beard is the symbol of strength. In the spittle, therefore, that ran down upon his beard, what are we to understand if not that words of weakness served to cloak His strength?

I assume, holy brethren, that you have now understood the title of this Psalm. If I were in a mind to go straight on with the Psalm, I fear that what you have heard would fade from your memory. I have interpreted the title of the Psalm in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. But tomorrow is Sunday and I owe you a sermon. So let up postpone it

until tomorrow, when you may have the pleasure of hearing the text of the Psalm also explained to you.

## SECOND DISCOURSE ON PSALM 33

1. Those of you who were present yesterday will doubtless remember my promise.<sup>1</sup> The time has come for me to discharge my debt in the Lord's name. He inspired the promise, He will grant its fulfilment. Charity leaves us, remember, in never-ending arrears, for it is ever being paid and ever owing, as the Apostle says: *Owe no man anything, but to love one another.*<sup>2</sup> The title of this Psalm I explained to you yesterday; and since this explanation took me rather a long while, I postponed explaining the text of the Psalm itself. Let us listen, therefore, to what the Holy Spirit says by the mouth of His holy prophet in the actual words of the Psalm, following on as they do from the title we discussed yesterday. Those who were not present perhaps consider that due to them also. However, since further considerable delay would possibly be unfair to those who have a claim on the remainder, let those who were absent yesterday but are here today make the best they can of a brief summary. If they want to question me further on any point, they will find my ears ready to listen to them for Christ's sake—not to take up time here and now—at some other moment.

2. I related how it was written in the Book of Kingdoms that when David was fleeing from Saul, he wished to take shelter with a certain King of Geth, Achis by name. But for fear that this king to whom he had fled might through envy contrive some mischief against him, since his exploits were already known there, he feigned



madness, and as if seized with mania *changed his countenance and, as we read, affected, and drummed upon the doors of the city, and was carried in his own hands, and fell down at the doors of the gate. And King Achis said: Why have you brought this fellow to me? Have I need of madmen?*<sup>3</sup> He therefore dismissed him, thus accomplishing what is written here: *He changed his countenance, and dismissed him, and went his way.* The king David actually dismissed was Achis, but here it is said that he *changed his countenance before Abimelech, and he dismissed him, and he went his way.* I have told you that the change of names was symbolical: otherwise, if the same name had been repeated in the title of the Psalm, it would have appeared merely to relate historical facts, without giving us any figurative prophecy. Each of these names, then, contains a great mystery. For Achis is interpreted "How can this be?" and Abimelech "the kingdom of my father." The phrase "How can this be?" denotes ignorance; you may regard it as the question of one who marvels and does not understand. The name Abimelech signifies the kingdom of the Jews, which Christ in person can call "the kingdom of my father"; for His father according to the flesh was David, and David ruled over the Jewish people. Before the kingdom of His father, then, He *changed his countenance, and he dismissed him, and he went his way,* for the sacrifice there was according to the order of Aaron; the sacrifice He instituted thereafter was according to the order of Melchisedech, in His own body and blood. He changed his features in the priestly office: He dismissed the Jewish race and came to the Gentiles. Then what is the meaning of *he affected?* He was full of affection. What affection

is comparable to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who beholding our frailty, submitted to temporal death with so much violence and insult, in order to set us free from everlasting death?

*And he drummed:* we make a drum simply by stretching skin across wood; and David's drumming foretold Christ on the cross. *He drummed*, moreover, *upon the doors of the city*: what are the doors of the city but our hearts which we had shut fast against Christ, who from the drum of the cross opened the hearts of mortal men? And *He was carried in his own hands*: how was *He carried in his own hands*? When *He* committed to us *His* very body and blood, *He* took into *His* own hands that which the faithful acknowledge; in a certain way *He* carried *Himself*, when *He* said: *This is my body*.<sup>4</sup>

*And he fell down at the doors of the gate*: that is, *He* humbled *Himself*. *He* fell, that is to say, to the very beginning of our faith. For the door of the gate is the threshold of faith, from which the Church sets forth and finally arrives at vision: for to believe what one does not behold, is to deserve entrance into the full enjoyment of God face to face. So much for the title of the Psalm; we have listened to a brief summary. Now let us listen to *His* very words as *He* affects and drums upon the gate of the city.

3. [V. 2] *I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall be always in my mouth*. Christ says this; let the Christian repeat it, because the Christian is incorporated into Christ, and Christ became man for this end, that the Christian might become an angel who cries: *I will bless the Lord*. When shall I *bless the Lord*? When *He* confers benefits upon you? When earthly possessions abound? When you have plenty of corn, oil, wine, gold, silver,

servants and cattle, when that body of yours maintains constant good health and freedom from disease, when your crops all flourish, when nothing is snatched away by an untimely end, when perfect happiness reigns in your home, when everything is thriving—is it then only that you are to bless the Lord? No, but *at all times*. So you must bless, both then and when according to circumstances and the Lord our God's infliction you suffer disruption or loss, when crops fail to spring up, or perish after they have sprung up. Such things do happen, and the result is poverty, want, toil, sorrow and temptation. But you who sang *I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall be always in my mouth*, must bless Him when He bestows these gifts, and bless Him when He takes them away. For it is He who gives and He who takes away; but Himself He never takes away from one who blesses Him.

4. Now who is it that blesses the Lord at all times, but the humble of heart? This humility our Lord taught us in His body and blood; for when He commits to us His body and blood, He sets before us His humility, as we see in that part of the story about David's feigned madness which we have passed over: *And his spittle ran down upon his beard*. When the lesson from the Apostle was read, you heard about that spittle, running down upon the beard. Somebody will ask me: "What spittle did we hear about?" Have we not just read the words of the Apostle: *The Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom?*<sup>5</sup> We have just read: *But we preach Christ crucified—here He was drumming—unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks,*

*Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* Spittle denotes foolishness, spittle denotes weakness. But if *the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men*, the spittle must not shock you. Notice, it runs down the beard. If spittle is a sign of weakness, the beard is a symbol of strength. Thus Christ cloaked His strength under the feebleness of a human body whose external weakness was evident, as it were, in the spittle; the divine power within was covered, like the beard. All this impresses upon us the lesson of humility. Be humble, if you would bless the Lord at all times; and let His praise be ever in your mouth. Job did indeed bless the Lord, and not only when he had an abundance of all things, which made him, so we read, rich and fortunate: rich in cattle, servants and house, fortunate in his children and all his belongings. All was taken away in a moment, yet he fulfilled what is written in this Psalm. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*, he cried; *as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord.*<sup>6</sup> Here you have the type of a man who blesses the Lord at all times.

5. Now what makes a man bless God at all times? His being humble. What does being humble imply? Not to search after praise for oneself. Anybody who wants to be praised in himself is proud. Where there is pride, there is no humility. Well, you would rather not be proud? To acquire humility, repeat the following: [V. 3] *In the Lord shall my soul be praised; let the meek hear and rejoice.* Those, I say, who wish to be praised but not in the Lord are not meek, but rough and rude, arrogant and proud. Our Lord would have meek beasts to ride



upon: you must be our Lord's mount, that is, you must be meek. He sits upon you, He governs you: do not be afraid of stumbling and falling headlong. The weakness is your own, but consider who it is that controls you. You may be the ass's colt, but you are bearing Christ. For He rode into the city on the ass's colt, and it proved a gentle mount. Was the beast ever praised? Was it to the beast they sang: *Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord?*<sup>7</sup> The ass-colt carried Him: but it was He that was carried who received the acclamations of those that went before and those that followed. And perhaps the beast said: *In the Lord shall my soul be praised; let the meek hear and rejoice.* Brethren, the ass never spoke like this; but the people who imitate that beast of burden must say it if they wish to carry the weight of their Lord. Possibly people are ruffled at being compared to the ass-colt on which our Lord rode; and some proud folk will say to me in contempt: "Why, he is making asses of us!" Very well; let whoever says that become our Lord's ass, for fear of becoming the horse and the mule devoid of understanding. For you know the Psalm in which it is said: *Do not become like the horse and the mule, who have no understanding.*<sup>8</sup> The horse and mule sometimes uprear their necks and throw their riders out of sheer ferocity. They are tamed with bit and bridle and blows, until they learn to submit and carry their master. But before your jaws are bruised with the bit, be meek and carry your Lord. Do not seek praise for yourself, seek it rather for Him who rides you. *In the Lord shall my soul be praised*, you must say; *let the meek hear and rejoice.* For when those who are not meek hear, far from rejoicing, they are enraged: these it is who reproach me for having made asses

of them. But let those who are meek be so good as to listen and correspond to what they hear.

6. The Psalm continues: [V. 4] *O magnify the Lord with me.* Who is this, exhorting us to magnify the Lord with him? Whoever belongs to Christ's body, brethren, ought to strive to make others join him in magnifying the Lord. Such a man as this loves the Lord. And how does he love Him? Without envying his fellow lover. Whoever loves with impure desire must necessarily burn with mortal jealousy. Let us suppose a man is pursuing some creature with pestilential passion, and has succeeded, perhaps at great cost, in gazing upon her unclothed—does he want another man to see her too? He cannot help being torn in pieces with jealousy and ill will, if another man also looks upon her. Woman's chastity is preserved, when he who has the right to behold her does so, and no other, or when not even he does.

Divine Wisdom is not like that: we shall see her face to face, we shall all see her, and nobody will grow jealous on that account. She shows herself to all, and she is unpolluted and chaste towards all. They will be changed into her; she will not be changed into them. She is truth, she is God. Have you ever heard, brethren, that our God could become other than He is? He is Truth, supereminent above all, He is the Word of God, the Wisdom of God, through whom all things were made. He has His lovers. But what does one who loves Him say? *O magnify the Lord with me.* I will not be alone in magnifying the Lord, I will not be alone in loving Him, I will not be alone in embracing Him. For if I embrace Him, it is not as if there were nothing left for anyone else to clasp. So sufficient is this Wisdom that every soul may embrace and enjoy her. How shall I put it, brethren? Shame on those

who love God in such a way as to begrudge Him to others! Worldlings take a liking to some charioteer, and the man infatuated with charioteer or gladiator would have the whole populace dote on him too; he sets them on with the cry: "I am crazy over this clown, I am crazy over this or that abomination; come and support me, won't you?" This fellow shouts among the crowd that others may share his infatuation for some vile object: yet a Christian never raises his voice in church to invite others to join him in loving God's truth! Stir up this love in yourselves, then, brethren, and cry out to one another, saying: *O magnify the Lord with me*. Let there be this glowing desire in you. Why am I quoting and explaining these words to you? If you love God, carry along all who are connected with you, and everybody in your house, and make them love God; if Christ's Body, that is to say, the unity of the Church is the object of your love, urge them on to delight in it. Cry: *O magnify the Lord with me*.

7. *And let us extol His name together*. What is the meaning of *let us extol His name together*? Praise Him with one accord. For many copies run thus: *O magnify the Lord with me, and let us extol His name with one accord*. Whether we say *together* or *with one accord*, it comes to the same thing. So then seize upon all you can, encouraging them, drawing them, beseeching, arguing, explaining, all in meekness and gentleness. Constrain them to love Him, so that if they magnify the Lord, they may magnify Him with one accord. Donatus' party also appears in its own eyes to be magnifying the Lord: what quarrel have they with the world at large? Let us tell them, brethren: *O magnify the Lord with me, and let us extol His name with one accord*. Why do you want to magnify

the Lord in a severed fragment? He is one; why do you want to make two peoples before the Lord? Why do you want to rend Christ's body? It is clear that He hung on the cross when He drummed; and whilst hanging on the cross He gave up the ghost. Those who had hanged Him came, and finding He had given up the ghost, did not break His legs; but they broke those of the thieves who were still alive on the cross,<sup>9</sup> to set them free from torment by a death made speedier through pain, as was the usual treatment for men crucified. The persecutor came, then, and found that our Lord had peacefully yielded up His spirit, in accordance with what He Himself had said, *I have power to lay down my life.*<sup>10</sup> For whom did He lay down His life? For all His people, for His whole Body. The persecutor came, as I was saying, and did not break Christ's legs; Donatus came and rent Christ's Church asunder. In the hands of persecutors Christ's body on the cross was left whole; yet in the hands of Christians Christ's Church is not left whole. Let us cry out, then, brethren, let us lament our loudest: *O magnify the Lord with me, and let us extol His name with one accord.* The Church cries out to them: it is the Church's voice, crying out to those who have cut themselves off from her. Why in fact have they broken off? Through pride. But Christ teaches us humility in delivering up His body and blood—which, as I have told you, holy brethren, is treated of and celebrated in the text of the Psalm where Christ's body and blood is set before us, where Christ's lowliness, which He dignified to take upon Himself for our sake, is represented to us.

8. [V. 5] *I sought*<sup>11</sup> *the Lord, and He heard me.* Where did the Lord hear? Within. Where does He bestow gifts? Within. There you pray, there you are heard, there you



are blessed. You have prayed, you have been heard, you have been blessed; and the man standing next you knows nothing of it. It has all taken place in secret, as our Lord says in the Gospel: *Enter into thy chamber, shut thy door and pray in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.*<sup>12</sup> Entering into your chamber means entering into your own heart. Happy are they who feel joy at entering into their hearts, and find no evil therein.

Consider, holy brethren, how loath to go home those men are who have bad wives. They sally out to the forum, at perfect ease; but when the time comes to return they feel depressed: they are now facing annoyance, nagging, acrimoniousness, upheaval; for where there is no peace between husband and wife the house is not well-ordered, and he much prefers to walk about the town. Well then, if they are miserable who when they return to their own hearth are afraid of being overwhelmed by the wrangling of their own family, how much more miserable are they who are reluctant to return to their own conscience for fear of being overwhelmed by the strife arising from their sins! So, if you would retire to your heart with pleasure, cleanse it: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.*<sup>13</sup> Get rid of the filth of evil desires, get rid of the stain of avarice, get rid of the pestilence of superstitions, get rid of sacrileges and evil thoughts, of hatred, I will not say against a friend, but even against an enemy: get rid of all these. Then enter into your heart and you will feel happy there. When you begin to feel happy there, this very cleanness of your heart will delight you and make you pray; just as when you come to some spot where silence reigns, where all is calm perhaps, and the place is clean, "Let us pray here," you say; the good order of the place gives you pleasure and you think God will listen to

you there. If the cleanliness of some visible place pleases you then, why does not the filth of your own heart disgust you? Go in, cleanse everything, raise your eyes to God, and He will hear you at once. Cry out: *I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and He delivered me from all my troubles*. Why? Because once you have been enlightened, once you begin to have a clear conscience, there still remain tribulations, since there will always remain a certain frailty, until death is swallowed up in victory, and this mortal hath put on immortality.<sup>14</sup> You must needs be chastised in this world; you must needs endure some trials and temptations. God will purify everything, He will snatch you out of all tribulation. Seek Him alone.

9. *I sought the Lord, and He heard me*. Those who are not heard are not seeking the Lord. Mark these words, holy brethren; the Psalmist did not say: "I sought gold from the Lord, and He heard me; I sought length of days from the Lord, and He heard me; I sought this or that from the Lord, and He heard me." It is one thing to seek something from the Lord, and another to seek the Lord Himself. *I sought the Lord*, he says, *and He heard me*. But when you pray, saying: "Put that enemy of mine to death," you are not seeking the Lord, but, so to speak, making yourself the judge over your enemy and making your God into an executioner. How do you know that he for whose death you are asking is not a better man than yourself? Perhaps from the very fact that he is not asking for yours. So do not seek anything outside the Lord, but seek the Lord Himself, and He will hear you, and even *as you are yet speaking He shall say: Here I am*.<sup>15</sup> What is the meaning of *Here I am*? Behold, I am present, what do you want? What do you ask of me? Whatever I give you is of less worth than myself: take

possession of my very self, enjoy me, embrace me. You are not yet wholly equal to it; lay hold of me by faith and you shall cleave to me—so God tells you—and I will relieve you of your other burdens so that you may be completely united to me, when I have changed this mortal being of yours to immortality;<sup>16</sup> so that you may be equal to my angels,<sup>17</sup> and may always look upon my face and rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you;<sup>18</sup> for you have sought the Lord, and He has heard you and delivered you from all your afflictions.

10. I have told you who the counselor, the lover is, who does not wish to be alone in embracing what he loves, and says: [V. 6] *Come ye to Him and be enlightened*. He speaks of what he has himself experienced. What does some spiritual-minded member of Christ's Body say, or rather, what does our Lord Jesus Christ Himself according to the flesh say, as the Head encouraging the other members? *Come ye to Him and be enlightened*. Or if you will, it is a Christian who lives by the spirit, who invites us to approach our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. But let us draw near to Him and be enlightened; not like the Jews who drew near to Him to be plunged into darkness. They approached Him to crucify Him; we approach Him to receive His body and blood. They were plunged into darkness by the Crucified; we are enlightened by eating and drinking the Crucified. See, the Gentiles are bidden: *Come ye to Him and be enlightened*. Christ was crucified among the Jews, who ground their teeth and stared upon Him; the Gentiles were not there; yet notice, they who were in darkness have drawn near, and they who did not see have been enlightened. How do the Gentiles draw near? Through pursuing Him by faith, sighing after Him in their heart, running after Him by charity.

Your feet represent your charity. Stand on both feet, do not limp. What are these two feet? The two precepts, love of God and love of our neighbor. On these feet run towards God, draw near to Him; for He Himself has bidden you run, and He has spread abroad His light simply that you may follow Him in splendid and godlike fashion. *And your faces shall not blush with shame. Come ye to Him*, the Psalmist says, *and be enlightened, and your faces shall not blush with shame.*<sup>19</sup> Only the proud man's face reddens with shame. Why? Because he wants to look important, and when he suffers insult, disgrace, worldly misfortune, or any affliction, he reddens with shame. But fear nothing, approach the Lord, and you shall not be put to shame. If an enemy has done you some harm, he appears superior to you in the eyes of men; but in God's eyes you are superior to him. I have captured him, I have bound him fast, I have killed him—how superior they feel who say such things! How superior the Jews felt when they struck our Lord, when they spat in His face and beat His head with a reed, when they crowned Him with thorns and clad Him in a garment of shame! How much finer were they! And He seemed at a disadvantage, for He fell down at the doors of the gate; but it was not He who blushed for shame. For He was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.<sup>20</sup> As the Light, then, cannot be put to shame, so neither does He allow one whom He enlightens to be put to shame. *Come ye to Him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not blush with shame.*

11. "But," someone will ask, "how am I to come to Him? I am laden with so much wrongdoing, so many sins; such heinous crimes cry aloud from my conscience; how dare I draw near to God?" How? On condition you



humble yourself by penance. But you say: "I am ashamed to perform penance."<sup>21</sup> Come to Him, then, and you will be enlightened, and your face shall not blush with shame. If the fear of being put to shame holds you back from penance, and yet it is only penance that makes you draw near to God, do you not see that you are showing guilt on your face? Your face has blushed with shame precisely because it has not drawn near to God: and it has not drawn near precisely because it is averse to doing penance. As the prophet affirms: [V. 7] *This poor man<sup>22</sup> cried, and the Lord heard him.* He teaches you how to make yourself heard. You are not heard because you are rich. In case you did cry, and were not heard, listen to the reason: *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.* Cry out as one in need, and the Lord will hear you. And how am I to cry out as one in need? Whatever your possessions, do not thereupon rely on your own strength; you must understand that you are in want, understand that you are poor just inasmuch as you are without Him who enriches you. But how did the Lord hear him? *And saved him*, says the Psalmist, *out of all his troubles.* And how does He save him out of all his troubles? [V. 8] *The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them.* This is the correct reading, brethren; not as some faulty copies give it:<sup>23</sup> *The Lord shall send His angel round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them;* but like this: *The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them.* Whom has he here called the angel of the Lord, who is to encamp round about those that fear Him, and deliver them? Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is called in prophecy the angel of the great counsel, the messenger of the great counsel: for so the prophets

have styled Him.<sup>24</sup> He, then, this angel, or this messenger of the great counsel, will encamp round about those who fear the Lord, and will deliver them. So have no fear of being hidden from sight: wheresoever you are, if you fear the Lord, you are known to that angel who will encamp round about you to deliver you.

12. Now he intends to speak openly of that mystery wherein he was carried in his own hands. [V. 9] *O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet.*<sup>25</sup> Does not the Psalm unfold and disclose the meaning of that feigned madness and deliberate mania, the sane insanity and sober intoxication of a David who prefigured something further, when those who represented King Achis said: "How can that be?" Our Lord had said: *Except a man eat my flesh and drink my blood, he shall not have life in him.*<sup>26</sup> And those who were ruled by Achis, that is, error and ignorance, what did they reply? *How can this man give us His flesh to eat?* If you do not know, taste, and see that the Lord is sweet: if you do not understand, you are King Achis. David will change his features and depart from you, he will dismiss you and go his way.

13. *Blessed is the man that hopeth in Him.* What need is there to expound this at length? Anybody who does not hope in the Lord is wretched. What kind of man does not hope in the Lord? One that hopes in himself. Sometimes, what is even worse, my brethren, do not forget it, sometimes men are unwilling to trust in themselves, but trust in other men. "So long as Gaius Seius is alive and well, you can do nothing to harm me." And possibly the man he speaks of is already dead. In this city some one may say: "While So-and-So is alive and well," and somewhere else So-and-So may be lying dead. How readily men say such things! They do not say: "I

trust in God that He will not allow you to harm me." They do not say: "I trust in my God that although He may allow you to touch my property, He will not let you touch my life." But when they say: "While So-and-So is alive and well," they refuse to help themselves and are a nuisance to those from whom they look for safety.

14. [V. 10] *Fear the Lord, all ye His saints, for there is no want to them that fear Him.* Many men are unwilling to fear the Lord for fear of going hungry. You tell them: "You must not defraud." And they reply: "How am I to live? There can be no trade without deception, no business without fraud." "But God punishes fraud. Fear God." "But if I fear God I shall have no means of livelihood." *Fear the Lord, all ye His saints, for there is no want to them that fear Him.* He has promised abundance to the anxious man, who is afraid that if he fears the Lord he may have to go without amenities. The Lord supported you when you despised Him, and will He forsake you when you fear Him? Be a wise man and beware of saying: "So-and-So is rich, and I am poor. See how much wealth he has amassed through not fearing the Lord; I do fear the Lord and because I fear Him here am I in destitution!" Mark well what follows: [V. 11] *The rich have wanted, and have suffered hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good.* If you take that literally it seems to play you false. You see many men, rich and wicked, dying amid their riches, having never tasted poverty in their lifetime. You see them grow old and reach the close of life in the enjoyment of abundant wealth, you see their funeral rites celebrated with lavish prodigality, you see the rich man, who has expired on his ivory bed, borne to the tomb amid the mourning of his entire household establishment.

And if you happen to know a little about that man's sins and crimes, you say to yourself: "I know how many misdeeds that man has committed: and here he has grown old and died in his bed, his own people are burying him, and his funeral rites are being celebrated with all this magnificence. I know the things that man has done. The Scripture—in which I hear and chant the words, *The rich have wanted, and have suffered hunger*—has misled and disappointed me. When was that man ever in need? When was he ever hungry? *But they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good.* I get up and go to church every day, every day I kneel and beseech the Lord, and I get no results from it: that man did not seek the Lord, yet he has departed this life in the enjoyment of all this wealth!" Anybody who harbors such thoughts is being strangled in the noose of temptation. He is seeking for perishable food on earth, not for a true reward in heaven; he puts his head into the snare of the devil, who gets him by the throat and drives him to commit sin, to make him imitate that rich man whom he has seen die amid such great possessions.

15. Do not understand the text in that way. How am I to understand it? Of spiritual goods. But where are they? They are seen not with the eyes but with the heart. I do not see those goods. He who loves them does. I cannot behold justice. It is not gold, nor yet silver. If it were gold, you would see it; but because it belongs to the sphere of faith, you do not see it. Yet if you do not behold faith, why do you love a faithful servant? Ask yourself what sort of servant you really value. You may have a servant who is handsome, tall and finely built, but a thief, a rogue and a swindler; and you may have another who is dwarfish, ill-featured and foul-skinned, but trust-



worthy, thrifty and steady. Now which of these two, I ask you, do you really value? If you judge by the eyes in your head, the one who is handsome but dishonest wins; if by the eyes of your heart, the one who is ugly but reliable. Hence you see that what you wish another to show towards yourself is fidelity: do you act in like manner. Why do you feel pleased with him who shows you fidelity, and praise him for qualities which are seen only by the eye of the heart? When you are filled with spiritual riches, can you be poor? So-and-So was rich because he possessed an ivory bed; the dwelling place of your heart is jeweled with all these great virtues, justice, truthfulness, faith, patience, endurance—and you forsooth are poor! Spread out your riches, if such as these belong to you, and compare them with rich men's wealth. But such and such a man, you say, found some high-priced mules on the market and bought them up. If you could find faith for sale, how much would you be ready to pay for it? Ungrateful as you are, God would give it you for nothing. I tell you, those rich men are in want. They are in want, and what is worse, in want of bread: I say this in case you should suppose they are in want of gold and silver, although they are short of even this also. How much did such a man possess, and was he ever satisfied with it? So he died a poor man because he wanted to gain more than he already had. They are in need even of bread. How have they no bread? If you do not see the point, did not our Lord say: *I am the living bread which came down from heaven;*<sup>27</sup> and *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.*<sup>28</sup> *They that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good.* The good here implied I have already explained.

16. [V. 12] *Come, children, hearken to me: I will*

*teach you the fear of the Lord.* You think, brethren, that it is I who am speaking: you must believe that David is speaking, believe the Apostle is speaking; or rather, you must believe that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is saying: *Come, children, hearken to me.* Let us listen to Him together. You must listen to Him speaking through me. He wishes to teach us; He who is humble, He who is drumming, He who is affecting, wishes to teach us. And what does He say? *Come, children, hearken to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* Let Him teach us, then, and let us lend our ears and take His teaching to heart. We must not open the ears of our body and shut those of our heart; but rather, as He Himself has said in the Gospel, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*<sup>29</sup> Who would refuse to hear Christ teaching through the prophet?

17. [V. 13] *Who is the man that desireth life and loveth to see good days?* That is the question. Does not every one of you answer: "I"? Is there a single one among you who does not love life, I mean, who does not desire life, or who does not sigh after good days? Do you not complain every day, saying: "How much longer are we to put up with all this? Every day things go from bad to worse; in our parents' times the days were happier and better." Oh, if you were to ask those parents of yours, they would make the same complaint about their days: "Our fathers were happy, we are miserable, we live in bad times. There was that tyrant; we hoped that when he died we might get a little relief, but worse followed. O God, show us good days!" *Who is the man that desireth life and loveth to see good days?* It is not here that he must look for good days. He is looking for a good thing, but not in the right direction. It is as if you were seeking some good man in the city which was not his home. You

would be told: "You are looking for a good man, a great man; go on looking, but not here; no use seeking him here, for you are never likely to find him." You are seeking for good days; let us seek for them together, but not here. "But our ancestors enjoyed them." You are mistaken; they all had to labor here below. Study the Scriptures; God caused them to be written precisely for our consolation. In the days of Elias there was a famine; our ancestors endured it. Heads of dead beasts of burden were sold for gold, people killed their own kinsfolk and consumed them. Two women agreed between themselves to kill their sons and eat them; one killed her son and they both devoured him; the second refused to kill her son, and the one who had already killed hers demanded that the other should do so too; and this unspeakable brawl was brought before the king, for they betook themselves to the king's presence, quarreling over the murder of their children.<sup>30</sup> God preserve us from food such as we read of here! In this world the days are always evil, but in God there are always good days. Abraham enjoyed good days, but it was interiorly, in his heart; he endured evil days when famine forced him to change his place of abode in order to seek for food.<sup>31</sup> Like him, all have had to look for it. *In hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness,*<sup>32</sup> says Paul—did he enjoy good days? But let not us servants be angry: our Lord Himself did not enjoy good days in this world; insults, injuries, the cross and suchlike evils were His portion.

18. The Christian must not complain then, he must realize in whose footsteps he treads. But if he wants good days, let him listen to the teacher who says: *Come, children, hearken to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* What is it you desire? Life and good days. Pay

attention and act. [V. 14] *Keep thy tongue from evil*. Do that. "I will not," says some wretched man. "I will not keep my tongue from evil, yet for all that I desire to see life and good days." Supposing a laborer of yours were to tell you: "I am going to destroy this vineyard, yet nevertheless I intend to claim my wages from you. You have brought me to the vineyard to trim and prune it; I shall lop off all the fruiting branches, I shall chop down the very stocks of the vines so that there will be no harvest for you to gather here, and when I have done all that, you will have to pay me for my work." Would you not say the fellow was a lunatic? Would you not chase him off the premises before ever he put hand to pruning hook? That is what men are like who want to do wrong, to swear falsely, to blaspheme against God, to murmur, to defraud, to drink excessively, to go to law, to commit adultery, to wear amulets and resort to fortunetellers—and, withal, to see good days. A man is told: If you do evil, you cannot demand a rich reward. If you are unjust, will God also be unjust? Well then, what am I to do? What do you desire? I desire life, I desire to see good days. *Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile*. In other words, make no man the victim of fraud or falsehood.

19. But what is the meaning of [V. 15] *Turn away from evil*? It is not enough for you to harm no man, to kill no man, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to defraud, not to bear false witness. *Turn away from evil*: but scarcely have you turned away when you say: "I am safe, I have done all I ought, I shall possess life, I shall see good days." You must not only *turn away from evil*; you must also *do good*. It is not enough that you should not strip a man; you must clothe the naked. If you have



not stripped any one, you have turned away from evil; but you will only do good on condition that you receive the stranger into your own home. So turn away from evil, then, as to do good. *Seek after peace and pursue it.* You are not told: You will have peace in this world. Seek after it and pursue it. Whither am I to pursue it? Whither it has preceded us. For our Lord is our peace; He has risen again and ascended into heaven. *Seek after peace and pursue it:* for when you also have risen, this which is mortal will be changed, and you will embrace peace where nobody will trouble you. There indeed is perfect peace, where you will hunger no more. In this world bread brings you peace; take away the bread and see what a war there will be in your internal organs.

See how the just themselves groan in this life, brethren, in order to teach us that while we seek for peace in life, we shall attain to it only after death. But let us possess it in part here, and then we shall deserve to possess it wholly yonder. What do I mean by "in part"? Let us live in concord here, let us love our neighbor as ourselves. Love your brother in the same way as your own self; be at peace with him. True, it is impossible to avoid occasional disputes, such as have arisen between brethren and between saints, even between Barnabas and Paul;<sup>33</sup> but not such as ruin harmony, not such as kill charity. For sometimes you are in opposition to your own self, yet you do not hate yourself. Any one who repents of something is at variance with himself. He has sinned, he turns in the opposite direction, he is angry with himself for having done this or committed that. Thus he has a struggle with himself, but this struggle leads to concord. Notice how the upright man wrestles with himself, saying: *Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me?*

*Hope in the Lord, for I will still give praise to Him.*<sup>34</sup> When he says to his soul: *Why dost thou disquiet me?*, obviously it did disquiet him. Perhaps the man himself wanted to suffer for Christ's sake, and his own soul was afflicted with sadness. And he who was aware of this and said: *Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me?*, was not as yet at peace with himself; but he was united in spirit to Christ, so that his soul obeyed him and did not disquiet him. Seek after peace, then, brethren. Our Lord has said: *These things I have spoken to you that in me you may have peace. In the world I do not promise you peace.*<sup>35</sup> In this life there is no true peace, nor is there serenity. The joy of immortality, the fellowship of angels, are in promise. But those who have not sought them while in this world, will not receive them when the promise is fulfilled.

20. [V. 16] *The eyes of the Lord are upon the just.* Therefore banish all fear. Exert yourself; the Lord's eyes are upon you. *And His ears unto their prayers.* What more do you want? If the master of a large establishment did not listen to his servant's complaint, the man would grumble and say: "What a lot we have to put up with here, and nobody takes any notice!" Is that what you are saying about God: "How much I suffer, and nobody takes any notice"? "If He did listen to me," perhaps you say, "He would rid me of my trouble. I cry out, yet I am still afflicted." Do but tread in His footsteps, and when you are in trouble He will listen to you. But He is a surgeon; there is still some poison in you. You cry out, yet He continues cutting, and He will not withdraw His hand until He has cut away as much as seems needful to Him. That man shows himself indeed a cruel surgeon who listens to the patient and spares the wound and its cor-

ruption. Look how mothers scrub down their little boys in the baths, and all for their good! Do not the youngsters yell beneath their grasp? Are they cruel, then, in not sparing them and not heeding their tears? Are they not, rather, full of motherly love? And yet the little fellows cry and get no mercy. Similarly, our God is full of tenderness, but He seems not to listen simply that He may heal and spare us forevermore.

21. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and His ears unto their prayers.* Perhaps the wicked are saying: "Well anyhow, I am safe in doing wrong, because the eyes of the Lord are not upon me. As things now are, God is attending to the just, He does not see me, and whatever I may be doing, I am doing with impunity." The Holy Spirit, beholding the thoughts of men, immediately added: *The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and His ears unto their prayers: [V. 17] but the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things:* to wipe out the remembrance of them from the earth.

22. [V. 18] *The just cried, and the Lord heard them and delivered them out of all their troubles.* The three children were just: they cried to the Lord out of the furnace, and at their praises the fire grew cold. The flame could not come near to hurt those innocent and upright children as they praised God, and He delivered them from the flame.<sup>36</sup> "Granted," some one says, "those three who were heard were just, and proved the text true: *The just cried, and the Lord heard them and delivered them out of all their troubles.* Now, I have cried and He has not delivered me. Either I am not just, or I am not fulfilling His commands, or else perhaps God does not see me." Have no fear, only fulfil His commands; and if He does not deliver you corporally, He will deliver you spirit-

ually. Did He who brought the three children out of the flames bring the Machabees out of the flames? Whereas the former sang hymns in the fire, did not the latter expire in it?<sup>37</sup> Is not the God of the three children also the God of the Machabees? The one He delivered, the other He did not deliver. Nay rather, He delivered both: He delivered the three children in that particular way in order to put carnal-minded men to confusion; but the Machabees He did not deliver in that way, so that their persecutors should advance to greater punishments, supposing as they did that they had overcome God's martyrs. He delivered Peter, when the angel came to him as he lay in chains and said to him: *Arise and go forth*. Suddenly his chains were loosed, he followed the angel, and thus God delivered him. Had Peter forfeited the state of justice, when He did not deliver him from the cross? Did He not deliver him then? Yea, indeed He did. Had he lived so long simply to become unrighteous? I consider He heard him then more surely than before, for then indeed He delivered him from all afflictions. When God delivered him the first time, how much he had to suffer afterwards! But finally He sent him where he could suffer evil no more.

23. [V. 19] *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and He will save the humble of spirit.*<sup>38</sup> God is supreme; let a Christian be humble. If he would have God on high become his neighbor, he, for his part, must be lowly. Brethren, these are great mysteries. God is above all: you exalt yourself and do not get near Him; you humble yourself, and He comes down to you. [V. 20] *Many are the afflictions of the just.* Does the Psalmist say: "Let Christians be just and listen to my words, and then they will suffer no affliction"? No, this



is not his promise; he says: *Many are the afflictions of the just*. The truth is, if men are unjust, they suffer fewer afflictions; if they are just, they suffer many. But after a few afflictions or none at all, the former reach everlasting affliction, from which they will never be delivered: whereas after many afflictions the just reach everlasting peace, where they will never suffer any evil. *Many are the afflictions of the just, but out of them all will the Lord deliver them.*

24. [V. 21] *The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken.*<sup>39</sup> This, however, brethren, we must not take in a material sense. By the bones of the faithful are denoted their foundations. For just as bones are the foundation of our body, so is faith the foundation of the Christian heart. Hence the patience inherent in faith is the fundamental skeleton; its bones cannot be crushed. *The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken.* Had the Psalmist asserted of Jesus Christ, our Lord and God: "The Lord keeps all the bones of His Son, not one of them shall be broken"—as was foretold of Him elsewhere, when the lamb was commanded to be slain and the injunction was given: *You shall not break a bone of him*<sup>40</sup>—then, in regard to our Lord, the prediction would have been fulfilled. For when He hung on the cross, He had expired before the soldiers came to the cross; and finding His body already lifeless they would not break His legs, so that thus the Scripture might be fulfilled.<sup>41</sup> But the promise has been made to Christians in general: *The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken.* Therefore, brethren, if we happen to have seen some saintly person suffering afflictions, and perhaps so hacked by the surgeon, or so mauled by some persecutor, that his bones were broken,

we must not say: "He could not have been a just man, for God has made this promise concerning His just ones, *The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken.*" Please observe that quite other bones are spoken of, those we have called the foundations of faith, that is to say, patience and endurance in all tribulations. These are the bones that are not broken. Listen, and examine the proof of my words from our Lord's passion. Our Lord was crucified in the midst; on either side were the two thieves. The one insulted Him, the other believed in Him; the one was condemned, the other was justified; the one received his punishment both here and hereafter, the other was told by our Lord: *Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise.*<sup>42</sup> Yet although the men who came did not break our Lord's bones, they did break those of the thieves:<sup>43</sup> the bones of the thief who blasphemed and the thief who believed were broken in exactly the same way. Then what becomes of the text: *The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken?* I ask you, was He who said: *This day thou shalt be with me in paradise*, powerless to preserve all this man's bones intact? Our Lord makes answer: "I have indeed kept them intact; for the blows that broke this man's legs could not break the foundation of his faith."

25. [V. 22] *The death of the wicked is very evil.* Mark my words, brethren, in view of what I have been saying. Truly great is the Lord and His mercy; truly great is He who has granted us to eat His body, wherein He underwent such great sufferings, and to drink His blood. How does He look upon those who think wicked thoughts and say: "Such and such a man died an evil death, for he was eaten by the beasts. Obviously he was not a good

man, and so he came to a bad end; otherwise he would not have come to such an end"? Is a man necessarily upright, then, who dies at home in his own bed? That, you say, is the very thing that perplexes me. I knew all about So-and-So's misdeeds, public and private, and here he has died comfortably at home, under his own roof, and not from any mishap on his travels, nor any for that matter in his ripe old age. Now listen. *The death of the wicked is very evil.* What seems to you a good death is a very evil one, if you look into it. Outwardly you see the man lying in his bed, but can you see him secretly snatched away to hell? Listen, brethren, and consider in the light of the Gospel what the very evil death of the wicked really means. Were there not two men in this world, one of them a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day, the other a poor man who lay at his gate full of sores, and the dogs came and licked his sores, and he desired to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table? And it so happened that this destitute man died—albeit destitute, he was an upright man—and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. What would anyone presumably have said who saw his body lying at the rich man's doorstep, with nobody to bury him? "Let that enemy of mine come to just such an end, and may I see the man who persecutes me in an equally sorry case!" His body is accursed and spit upon, his wounds stink; yet he himself rests in Abraham's bosom. If we are Christians, let us believe this; if we do not believe, brethren, let none of us pretend to be Christian. Faith is our guide. Our Lord has told us so: His word holds good. Is what an astrologer tells you true, pray, and what Christ tells you untrue? What sort of death did this rich man

die? What sort of death would a man die in purple and fine linen? How sumptuous, how stately! What magnificent funeral rites were celebrated! With what quantities of spices was that dead body interred! And yet when, tormented in hell, he begged for a drop of water to be let fall upon his burning tongue from the finger of that despised pauper, even this boon he could not obtain.<sup>44</sup> Realize then what *The death of the wicked is very evil* means; and do not interrogate the couches spread with costly coverlets, and the flesh swathed in all manner of rich wrappings, the friends making a great show of grief, the loudly lamenting household, the crowd of dependents walking before and behind in the funeral procession, the monuments encrusted with marble and gold. For if you question these things, they give you a lying answer, calling the death of many who were not merely trifling sinners but downright villains the best possible death, inasmuch as they were entitled to be thus bewailed, thus embalmed and enshrouded, thus borne forth to burial and thus entombed. But ask the Gospel, and it will reveal to your faith the rich man's soul burning in torments, and deriving no help whatever from all the honors and funeral solemnities which the vanity of the living has shown towards his dead body.<sup>45</sup>

26. Since, however, there are many classes of sinners, and it is difficult or perhaps in this life impossible not to be a sinner, the Psalmist immediately went on to state which class of sinners would die a very evil death. *And they that hate the just*, he says, *shall be guilty*. To what just one does he refer but to Him who justifies the ungodly?<sup>46</sup> To what just one but our Lord Jesus Christ, who moreover is the propitiation for our sins?<sup>47</sup> Hence those who hate Him die a very evil death, because they who



are not reconciled to our God through Him—for [V. 23] *The Lord will redeem the souls of His servants*—die in their sins. A man's death is to be regarded as very good or very evil according to the state of his soul, not according to the insults or the honors that are shown towards his body in the sight of men. *And none of them that trust in Him shall offend.* This is the extent of human righteousness, that however much progress we make, mortal life cannot be wholly without offense. At least, therefore, we shall not offend in this respect, so long as we place our trust in Him, in whom is the remission of offenses. Amen.

#### FIRST DISCOURSE ON PSALM 34

1. You must know, dearly beloved, that the task of discussing this Psalm has been laid upon me by the command of my brethren and fellow bishops.<sup>1</sup> They have wished us all to draw some instruction from it. We all draw it from Him under whom alike we study and in whose school we are fellow pupils.

The title of this Psalm will not delay us; it is brief and, especially for those reared in God's Church, not hard to understand. It runs thus: [Verse 1] *For David himself.* This Psalm, then, is for David himself: David is interpreted "strong of hand" or "desirable." It is a song, then, to Him who is strong of hand and desirable, who has vanquished our death, who has promised us life; strong of hand in that He has vanquished our death, desirable in that He has promised life everlasting. What could be stronger than that hand which touched the bier, and forthwith the dead man rose up?<sup>2</sup> What could be stronger than that hand which has overcome the world, not armed with the sword

but nailed to the wood? What, again, could be more desirable than He for whom the martyrs, who had not seen Him, were ready to die, that they might be worthy to attain to Him? The song, then, is for Him. Would that our heart and our tongue could sing in fitting fashion! It can do so only if He Himself will deign to set the theme. None sings as befits our Lord but he who has received from Him the subject of his song. In short, what we are now singing is spoken by His Spirit through His prophet, and in these words we recognize both ourselves and Him. We are doing Him no wrong in saying "ourselves and Him," since from the height of heaven He cried out: *Why persecutest thou me?*<sup>3</sup>, whereas nobody was touching Him, and it was we who were suffering affliction on earth. Let us listen, then, to His voice, now that of the Body and now that of the Head. This is a Psalm calling upon God against our enemies in the tribulations of this world. Beyond question the speaker is Christ Himself, afflicted sometimes as Head, at other times in His Body. It is nevertheless through afflictions that He bestows upon all His members life everlasting, the promise of which has made Him an object of desire.

2. *Judge thou, O Lord*, says the Psalmist, *them that wrong me; overthrow them that fight against me*. If God be for us, who is against us?<sup>4</sup> And by what means does God do this for us? [V. 2] *Take hold of arms and shield, and rise up to help me*. It is a wonderful sight to behold God in arms on your behalf. What is His shield? What are His arms? *O Lord*—as the very man who is speaking here says in another place<sup>5</sup>—*thou hast crowned us as with a shield of thy good will*. If we have made good progress, those arms of His, with which He not only protects us but also smites His enemies, will be our very selves. In

fact, just as we receive our arms from Him, so we too provide His equipment. But He is equipped with those He has created; we are provided with arms received from Him who created us.

These, says the Apostle in a certain passage, are our arms: the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.<sup>6</sup> He has armed us with weapons such as you have heard enumerated, glorious, unvanquished, invincible, glittering; spiritual, it is true, and invisible, for we are fighting invisible foes. If you see your enemy, then your armor too must be seen. We are armed with faith in things we do not behold, and we overthrow enemies we do not behold. Nevertheless, dearly beloved, you must not regard these weapons as of such a nature that what is a shield, for example, must perforce always be a shield, or what is a helmet must always be a helmet, or what is a breastplate, always a breastplate. It may be true of material weapons, although those made of iron can be altered, so that an ax may be made out of a sword. But we see that in one place the Apostle himself has mentioned the breastplate of faith,<sup>7</sup> and in another the shield of faith. So this same faith can be both breastplate and shield: shield, because it withstands and parries the enemies' missiles; breastplate, because it does not allow your vital parts to be pierced. These are our arms: but what are God's?<sup>8</sup>

We read in a certain passage: *Deliver my soul from the wicked ones, thy sword from the enemies of thy hand.*<sup>9</sup> What the Psalmist first expressed as *from the wicked ones* is repeated in the next verse as *from the enemies of thy hand*, and what he first called *my soul* becomes *thy sword*, that is, thy blade. Hence he termed his soul God's sword:

*Deliver my soul*, said he, *from the wicked ones*; in other words, *thy sword from the enemies of thy hand*. Thou takest hold of my soul and dost rout mine enemies. And what is this soul of ours, however brilliant and far-reaching, however sharp and well-oiled, brandished though it be with the brightness and glitter of wisdom? What is this soul of ours, or of what is it capable, unless God grasps it and fights with it? Even the best-wrought sword lies useless unless it has a warrior to wield it. But as I have said already in regard to our weapons, none of them need be taken in such a hard and fast way that one thing cannot serve for another. We find that the same principle applies also to God's armor. For instance, the Scripture has called the soul of the just God's sword; again it calls the soul of the just God's seat; the soul of the just is the seat of wisdom.<sup>10</sup> He makes of our soul whatever suits His purpose. When it is in His hand, let Him use it as He wills.

3. Let Him arise, then. Such is the appeal made to Him. Let Him take up His arms, let Him rise up to help us. The reason for His rising is given elsewhere when the same voice cries: *Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord?*<sup>11</sup> In fact, when we talk of our Lord sleeping, it is we who are asleep, and when we say He rises up, it is we who are stirred to action. Our Lord was asleep in the ship; that is why the ship was tossed about, because Jesus was asleep. For if Jesus were awake there, the ship would not be battered by the waves. Your ship stands for your heart; Jesus in the ship denotes the faith in your heart. If you are mindful of your faith, your heart is tranquil in the storm; if you have forgotten your faith, Christ is asleep: beware of shipwreck. However, do what requires doing; wake Him from sleep with the cry: "Lord, rise up, we



are perishing," that He may rebuke the winds and there may be calm in your heart.<sup>12</sup> All temptations will depart, or at any rate will effect nothing, when Christ, that is to say, your faith, keeps watch in your heart. And what does *Rise up* mean? Make thyself known, come forth, make thy presence felt. *Rise up, then, to help me.*

4. [V. 3] *Bring out the sword and shut up the way against them that persecute me.* Who are your persecutors? Possibly your neighbor, or some man whom you have injured or wronged, or somebody who wants to take away your goods, or somebody you oppose by proclaiming the truth, or whose sins you are reproofing, or else some evildoer to whom your own good life is a reproach. I grant that such people are our enemies and persecute us. But we are taught to recognize other enemies, against whom we struggle invisibly, those about whom the Apostle warns us in the words: *Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood*, not, that is to say, against human beings; it is not against those you see but against those you do not see; against *principalities and powers and the rulers of the world of this darkness*.<sup>13</sup> When he said *the rulers of the world*, implying the devil and his angels, he had to take care for fear men should misunderstand and suppose that the world was ruled by the devil and his demons. But because the world is the name given to this fabric that we behold,<sup>14</sup> and also to sinners and to those who love the world, to those in short of whom it is said: *And the world knew Him not*,<sup>15</sup> and: *The whole world is seated in wickedness*,<sup>16</sup> the Apostle has made quite clear of what world he has designated them the rulers. *Of this darkness*, he adds. Ruler of the world, I repeat, rulers of this darkness. Again he tries to make us understand the phrase of *this darkness*. Of what darkness are the devil and his angels

the rulers? Of all the infidels, all the wicked, spoken of in the text: *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*<sup>17</sup> And lastly, what does the same Apostle say to the many among them who had received the gift of faith? *For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord.*<sup>18</sup> You do not want to be ruled by the devil? Pass over to the light. But by what means will you pass over to the light, unless God draws His sword and snatches you from the hands of your enemies and persecutors? In what way does He draw His sword? We have already heard what His sword is: it is the soul of the just. Once the just are multiplied, then the sword is drawn, and the way shut up against the foes. For in speaking of this unsheathing of the sword, the Apostle warns us to live uprightly. *That he who is on the contrary part, he proceeds to add, may be afraid, having no evil to say of us.*<sup>19</sup> The way is shut up against him, because he cannot find anything to say against the saints.

5. Now how are just men formed? And what do the enemies who persecute us say? What do those invisible enemies say? And are the just reduced to silence? Before all else the foes who attack us unseen would persuade the human heart that God is not our helper, so that going in search of other aids we may be found defenseless and captured by these selfsame enemies. Such, then, is their suggestion. Especially must we be on our guard against those whisperings which are brought to our notice in another Psalm: *Many are they who rise up against me, many say to my soul: There is no salvation for him in his God.*<sup>20</sup> What reply is here given to these insinuations? *Say to my soul: I am thy salvation.* When thou dost as-

sure my soul, *I am thy salvation*, it will live uprightly, so that I shall seek none but thyself to help me.

6. What follows? [V. 4] *Let them be confounded and ashamed that seek after my soul:* for they seek it simply to destroy it. If only they sought it for a good end! In another Psalm, in fact, the speaker blames mankind for this very thing, that no one was concerned for his soul: *Flight hath failed me, and there is no one that seeketh after my soul.*<sup>21</sup> Who says: *There is no one that seeketh after my soul?* Is it perhaps He of whom the prophet had spoken so long before: *They have dug my hands and feet, they have numbered all my bones; and they have looked and stared upon me; they parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they cast lots?*<sup>22</sup> All this was now happening before their eyes, and there was no one that had any concern for His soul. Let us beseech Him then, brethren, to say to our soul: *I am thy salvation*, and to open its ears so that it may listen to Him saying: *I am thy salvation*. For He says it indeed, but some are deaf to His voice; and therefore, in the thick of trouble, they more readily listen to the enemies who beset them. When in need, in distress, or in want of temporal goods, the soul too often seeks help from the demons; it chooses to consult men possessed by devils, it goes in search of fortunetellers. The invisible enemies in pursuit have closed in, entered, defeated, captured, overcome the soul, and have said: *There is no salvation for him in his God*. It has remained deaf to the voice that said: *I am thy salvation*.

Say to my soul: *I am thy salvation*, that they may be confounded and ashamed that seek after my soul. Yes, thou dost say to it: *I am thy salvation*. I will listen to Him assuring me: *I am thy salvation*. No other salvation will I seek but the Lord my God. Is help afforded me from

created things? It comes from Him. If I lift up my eyes to the mountains, whence help is to come to me, nevertheless my help is not from the mountains but from the Lord who made heaven and earth.<sup>23</sup> When such temporal trials befall, does God make use of a human instrument to help you? He Himself is your salvation. Does God make use of an angel? He Himself is your salvation. All things are subject to Him, and in this transient life He helps one from this side, another from that, but eternal life He grants solely and directly from Himself. Believe me, when you are beset with difficulties, what you want does not lie under your hand, but He whom you seek is at your side. Seek Him, then, who can never fail you. Supposing His gifts are taken away: is He who gave them taken away? Supposing what He had bestowed is given back to you: does your wealth consist in the goods thus restored, and not rather in Him who took them away to test you and gave them back to comfort you? He is comforting us when we enjoy a sufficiency. He comforts us as though on a journey, meaning us to realize it is only a journey; for you should regard the whole of this life, and everything you use in it, as an inn for a traveler,<sup>24</sup> not a permanent habitation. Remember, although you have journeyed part of the road, the remainder still lies ahead: you have stepped aside for refreshment, not fallen out as a deserter.

7. There are some who say: "God, who is good, great, supreme, invisible, eternal, incorruptible, is going to give us life everlasting, and that incorruption He has promised in the resurrection; but meanwhile these earthly and transient affairs are the province of the world and the rulers of this darkness." So saying, while wrapped up in the love of all these worldly things, they leave God aside



as if such things were no concern of His; and with impious sacrifices and all kinds of magical arts, or by every manner of underhand bribery, they try to provide themselves with temporal possessions, such as money, wife, children and whatever else will either make life more comfortable as it passes or retard its onward march. Divine Providence, however, has been on the watch against this supposition. To convince us that all these things belong to Him and that all are in His power, not only the eternal things He promises for the future, but even the temporal things which He gives on earth to whom He wills and when He wills in due season—for He knows to whom to give or not give, like the physician administering medicine who knows the patient's disease better than the patient himself does—to convince us of this, as I said, God has differentiated the periods of the Old and the New Testament. In the Old, the promises given are of temporal possessions, but in the New, of the kingdom of heaven. For the most part the prescriptions of worshiping God and living uprightly are exactly the same in both dispensations. As, however, the promises given in each are obviously different, the orders of Him who commands and the obedience of him who serves are the same, but the recompense, so to speak, is not the same. For the Israelites were told: "You shall receive the promised land and have dominion in it, you shall overcome your enemies and not be subjugated by them, you shall have abundance of all things in this land and beget children."<sup>25</sup>

These were earthly promises, but they were also figurative. I grant that some men received them exactly as they were promised; in fact, many did so receive them. For the land was given to the children of Israel, riches were given,

sons were given to barren and aged women who besought God, trusting in Him alone and seeking no other helper even in matters such as these. They heard the Lord's voice in their hearts: *I am thy salvation*. If for eternal things, why not for temporal ones? God makes this clear in the case of that holy man Job; for even the devil himself had no power to take away his goods except by receiving it from the Supreme Power. He could envy the holy man, but could he injure him? He could accuse him, but could he condemn him? Was he able to take away anything, or to harm so much as a fingernail or a hair of his head, without saying to God: *Stretch forth thy hand?*<sup>26</sup> What does *Stretch forth thy hand* mean? Give me power. He was given it. The one tempted, the other was tempted. Yet he who was tempted overcame, he who tempted was overcome. For God, who had allowed the devil to take away these goods, did not inwardly desert that servant of His; He made His servant's soul a sword by which He defeated that same devil. And the outcome? I am thinking of mankind in general. Vanquished in Paradise, man is victor on a dunghill. In the one place he was overcome by the devil through a woman, in the other he overcame both the devil and the woman. *Thou hast spoken*, said he, *like one of the foolish women. If we have received good things at the hand of the Lord, why should we not receive evil?*<sup>27</sup> How well he had learnt the lesson: *I am thy salvation*.

8. *Let them be confounded and ashamed that seek after my soul*. Consider this in relation to human beings. *Pray*, says our Lord, *for your enemies*.<sup>28</sup> But here we have a prophecy; and what is said in the form of an imprecation must be interpreted in a prophetic sense. "Let this

and that happen" means simply "This and that is to happen." In that sense, then, you must take the prophecy: *Let them be confounded and ashamed that seek after my soul*. What is the meaning of *Let them be confounded and ashamed*? They will be confounded and ashamed. This has actually happened: many have been put to a wholesome confusion; many, becoming ashamed, have passed over with loving devotion from persecuting Christ to the company of His members—and they would not have done it had they not been put to confusion and shame. Therefore the Psalmist was wishing them well.

But the vanquished are of two kinds, for they are overcome in two different ways. Either their defeat leads to their return to Christ, or else to their condemnation by Christ. And this being so, these two kinds are set forth here, obscurely it is true, and calling for an interpreter. Take the words: *Let them be confounded and ashamed that seek after my soul. Let them be turned back*, and apply them to those who are converted. They must not lead but follow; they must not give advice but take it. Peter, for instance, wanted to take the lead when our Lord spoke of His coming passion: he wanted to give Him wholesome advice—the sick man wanted to give wholesome advice to his healer! Therefore in spite of our Lord's assurances of the truth about His future passion, what did he say to Him? *Lord, be it far from thee—have consideration for thyself—this shall not be*. He wanted to lead the way and give our Lord second place. And what did He reply? *Go behind me, satan*.<sup>29</sup> When you lead the way, you become my adversary; when you follow, you become my disciple. To such as these are addressed the words: *Let them be turned*

*back and be confounded that devise evil against me.* For as soon as they fall into the second place, they no longer plan evil but desire the rightful course.

9. What about the others? Not all are conquered so as to be converted and believe: many persist in their obstinacy, many retain the spirit of self-assertiveness in their hearts, and if they do not actually thrust it forward, yet they keep it pent up, and given the opportunity they burst forth with it. Regarding such men what do we now read? [V. 5] *Let them become as dust before the wind. Not so the wicked, not so: but like the dust, which the wind driveth from the face of the earth.*<sup>30</sup> The wind stands for temptation, the dust for the wicked. When temptation comes, the dust is blown away; it neither stands firm nor resists. *Let them become as dust before the wind, and let the angel of the Lord afflict them.* [V. 6] *Let their way become dark and slippery.* A horrible way! Who does not dread the very thought of darkness? Who does not try to avoid the very prospect of a slippery road? On a dark and slippery track how will you fare? Where plant your foot? These two evils denote the great punishments inflicted on men: darkness signifies ignorance, a slippery path, lust:<sup>31</sup> *Let their way become dark and slippery, and let the angel of the Lord pursue them,* so that they cannot stand their ground. For when anyone surrounded by darkness in a slippery place perceives that should he move a step he will fall, especially as he has no light to guide his feet, he probably decides to wait until it grows clearer; but here we find the angel of the Lord in pursuit. The Psalmist foretold that this would happen to them; he did not, so to speak, wish it to happen. At the same time the prophet, animated by the spirit of God, predicts their punishments even as God carries



them out, with a judgment which is sure, good, just, holy and peaceful; he is not moved by anger, nor by bitter zeal, he is actuated by the motive not of wreaking vengeance but of punishing vice by justice. That is why it is a prophecy.

10. How do such evils as these arise? What the offense? Listen to the offense: [V. 7] *For without cause they hid for me the corruption of their trap.*<sup>32</sup> Notice, as regards our Head Himself, the Jews actually did that; they hid their trap to destroy Him. They hid their trap for whom? For Him who beheld the hearts of the traitors that hid it. And yet He mixed with them as though He were ignorant, apparently their dupe, whereas it was they who were caught in the trap in supposing that He was. He lived among them with all the appearances of being taken in by their lies, because we likewise should have to live among such people and so undoubtedly fall victims to their deceit. He saw His own betrayer, and chose him as the more necessary to His work. Through that man's evil He wrought a great good; and yet he was chosen among the Twelve, so that not even so small a number as a dozen should be without one bad member. This was to set us an example of patience, for we have to live among the wicked; we have to bear with wicked men, whether we recognize them or not. He set an example of patience so that you may not fail when you come to live among miscreants. And since that group of Christ's followers, the Twelve, did not end with them, how much more ought we to be steadfast, now that what was foretold about the intermingling of the wicked is fulfilled in the Church at large? For that group of disciples saw nothing of the increase promised to Abraham's seed, and that threshing floor whence the heap is to come forth

that will fill the barn. Why, then, during the threshing, do we not bear with the chaff, as is fitting, until it is cleansed away by the final winnowing? For the wicked have to face it, even as you have heard.

11. And now, what comes next? *Without cause they hid for me the corruption of their trap. Without cause—* what is the force of that? I have done them no evil, no injury. *Without cause they upbraided my soul. Without cause?* They have spoken falsehoods, they have proved nothing. [V. 8] *Let the trap which they know not come upon them.* A fine retribution; nothing could be more just. They have set a trap of which I should be unaware; let the trap of which they are unaware come upon them. For I am aware of their trap. But what trap is to come upon them? That of which they are unaware. Let us listen, and perhaps the Psalmist will tell us what it is. *Let the trap which they know not come upon them.* Perhaps you think there is one that they have hidden for him, and another that is to come upon them? No; well, what?<sup>33</sup> Every man is bound with the fine hairs of his own sins.<sup>34</sup> They are deceived by the very thing with which they intended to deceive. They are injured by the very thing with which they endeavored to injure. For he proceeds: *And let the net which they have hidden catch them.* It is as though somebody prepares a cup of poison for another person, and absent-mindedly drinks it up; or as though somebody, having dug a pit into which his enemy is to fall in the darkness, forgets what he has dug, and walking that way is himself the first to fall into it. From now onwards, my brethren, believe this, accept it as a fact, and if you possess the higher faculty of sound judgment, examine the truth of my words again and again: There is no wicked man who does not first injure

himself. Think of wickedness as fire. You want to set something alight: the thing you use to light it is already burning, for unless it were, it would not enkindle. You have a torch, and you put the torch to something to set it alight; must not this torch you apply be already burning, before it can set fire to anything? Wickedness then comes forth from you, and whom does it first ruin but yourself? Does it injure the bough to which it is applied, and not injure its own root? Indeed, I tell you, it is possible that your wickedness may not harm another; it is impossible for it not to harm yourself. What harm actually came to the holy man Job, of whom I have already spoken? According to another Psalm: *As a sharp razor thou hast wrought deceit.*<sup>35</sup> What is a sharp razor used for? To cut off hairs, superfluous things. What do you do, then, to him you wish to injure? If a good-for-nothing fellow whom you wish to injure conspires with you in some evil-doing, it is not your malice but his own that will harm him. But if a man is inwardly free from malice, and subjects a pure heart to the voice that says: *I am thy salvation*, you are assailing him from without, not capturing the inward man; but your malice proceeds from your own heart and takes toll of yourself first. You are rotten inwardly, whence this worm has crawled out, leaving nothing sound within. *And let the net which they have hidden catch them; and into that very trap let them fall.* It is not—as you were perhaps thinking a little while ago when you heard: *Let the trap which they know not come upon them*—it is not as though it were some different one which being hidden could not be avoided. Into what trap, then? Into that very same mischief they had hidden for me. That happened to the Jews, did it not? Our Lord vanquished their iniquity, but they were vanquished by

their own iniquity: He rose for us, they met death within themselves.

12. So much, then, for those who would harm me; what about myself? [V. 9] *But my soul shall rejoice in the Lord*, as in Him from whom the soul has heard the words: *I am thy salvation*: as one who is not seeking other external wealth, not seeking to surround herself with pleasures and worldly goods, but cleaving to her true Beloved without thought of reward, not looking for delights at His hands, but setting Him up as the sole source of her delight. What, indeed, can be given to me that is better than God? God loves me; God loves each of you. See, He has made the offer, ask what you will.<sup>36</sup> If the emperor were to say to you: "Ask what you will," what requests for tribuneships and chief offices of state would pour from your lips! How much you would plan to get for yourself and bestow upon others! God tells you: "Ask what you will." What are you going to ask? Rack your brains, stir up your greed, stretch and expand your cupidity to the utmost; it is not a mere mortal, but God Almighty who has bidden you: "Ask what you will." If you are a lover of property, you will want to possess the whole earth, so that every single person born into it shall be your tenant or your slave. And when you own the whole earth, what then? You will ask for the sea, in which, after all, you cannot live. In that piece of acquisitiveness the fishes will come off better than you. But perhaps you will own the islands? Go beyond that too, ask for the air as well, even though you cannot fly in it; extend your covetousness as far as the heavens, call the sun, moon and stars your own, since He who made them all has said: "Ask what you will": and yet you will find nothing more precious, nothing more excellent



than Himself who made them all. Ask for Him who made them, and in Him and from Him you will possess all He has made. All things are precious, for all are beautiful: but what more beautiful than He? They are strong: but what more strong than He? And there is nothing He more desires to give than Himself. If you can find anything better, ask for it. If you ask for anything else, you wrong Him and harm yourself, by preferring what He made before Him, whereas He, its Maker, desires to give you Himself.

Filled with this love, a certain soul addressed Him thus: *Art not thou my portion, O Lord?*<sup>37</sup>, that is, thou art my portion. Let those who will make property their choice, let them make material things their portion: as for me, thou art my portion, I have chosen thee for myself. And again: *The Lord is the portion of my inheritance.* Let Him possess you, that you may possess Him: you will be His own property, you will be His own dwelling place. He possesses you in order to benefit you, He is possessed by you in order to benefit you. Could you confer any benefit on Him? *I have said to the Lord: Thou art my God, for thou hast no need of my goods.*<sup>38</sup> *But my soul shall rejoice in the Lord. It shall be delighted in His salvation.* God's salvation is Christ.<sup>39</sup> *Because my eyes have seen thy salvation.*<sup>40</sup>

13. [V. 10] *All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like to thee?* Who is capable of giving an interpretation worthy of the words themselves? For myself, I feel they should be simply enunciated, not explained. Why seek this or that? What is like to your Lord? He confronts you everywhere. *All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like to thee? The wicked have told me pleasant things, but not according to thy law,*<sup>41</sup> O Lord. There have been

persecutors who said: "Worship Saturn, worship Mercury." "I do not worship idols," the man replies. "*Lord, who is like to thee? They have eyes and see not; they have ears and hear not.*"<sup>42</sup> *Lord, who is like to thee*, who hast made the eye for seeing, the ear for hearing? But," he continues, "I do not worship idols, for a craftsman has made them." "Worship a tree, a mountain—has a craftsman made that?" Here again: *Lord, who is like to thee?* Earthly things are shown to me; thou art the Creator of the earth. From this perhaps they pass on to show me the higher creation, and say to me: "Worship the moon, worship this sun, whose light like a great lamp from the heavens brings day into being." And hereupon I openly reply: "*Lord, who is like to thee?* It is thou who hast made the moon and the stars, thou who hast given light to the sun by day and set the heavens in order." Many things of a higher order there are that cannot be seen. But possibly at this point I shall also be bidden: "Worship the angels, adore the angels." And at that I shall say: "*Lord, who is like to thee?* The angels themselves are creatures of thy hand. What would they be if they beheld thee not? Nothing. Better it is to possess thee together with them than to fall away from thee for having adored them."

14. *All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like to thee?* O Body of Christ, holy Church, let all thy bones say: *Lord, who is like to thee?* Even though the flesh give way before persecution, let the bones yet say: *Lord, who is like to thee?* For of the just it is said: *The Lord loveth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken.*<sup>43</sup> How enumerate the many upright men who have had their bones broken in persecution? To sum up, *the just man liveth by faith,*<sup>44</sup> and Christ *justifieth the ungodly.*<sup>45</sup> Now

how does He justify him, unless he believes and makes confession? *For with the heart we believe unto justice, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*<sup>46</sup> Therefore that notorious thief, even after being dragged from his robbery to the judge, and from the judge to the cross, was yet justified on the cross itself: he believed with the heart and made confession with the mouth. Our Lord would not have told a criminal not yet justified: *This day thou shalt be with me in paradise;*<sup>47</sup> and yet his bones were broken. For when the time came to take down the bodies for the sake of the approaching Sabbath, our Lord was found already lifeless, and His bones were not broken.<sup>48</sup> But in order that those who were yet living might be taken down, their legs were broken, so that, expiring under this torment, they could then be buried. Were the bones of the thief who persisted in his impiety on the cross broken, and not also those of him who believed with the heart unto justice, and with the mouth made confession unto salvation? Then what becomes of the promise: *The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken?*<sup>49</sup> Is it not that all who are upright, steadfast of heart, strong, yielding to no persecutions or temptations which would make them consent to evil, are termed the bones in our Lord's Body? And what makes them able to resist any and every temptation? When the persecutors tell you: "There is a god for you! See what a god he is! Let him draw nigh, let him cast his spell<sup>50</sup> on you. Listen, here is this or that high priest on the mountain. Perhaps you are poor because that god is not helping you: supplicate him and he will help you. Perhaps you are ill just because you do not pray to him: pray to him and you will recover. Perhaps you have no children for the same reason: make supplication to him

and you will have them"—then, if the man concerned forms one of the bones in our Lord's Body, he rejects all these insinuations with the reply: *Lord, who is like to thee?* Grant, if thou wilt, even in this life, what I ask; if thou wilt not, do thou, whom I ever seek, be thyself my life. How shall I go forth to thee with open countenance, if I have worshiped another and offended thee? I may die tomorrow; with what countenance shall I behold thee?

Great is God's mercy; He has both warned us to lead a good life and hidden from us that final day of our death, that we may not promise ourselves any certain future. To-day I act and live: I do not act tomorrow. What if tomorrow does not find you? Speak, then, as one of Christ's bones: *Lord, who is like to thee? All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like to thee?*

15. *Who deliverest the poor from the hand of them that are stronger than he; the needy and the poor from them that strip him.* I am reading the Psalm and expounding it when necessary only up to this point today. Although I wish to say more, this must suffice for the present, for fear it should become tedious. *Who deliverest the poor from the hand of them that are stronger than he.* Who is the deliverer, but He who is strong of hand? This David will deliver the poor man from the hand of them that are stronger than he. For the devil had proved more powerful in mastering you because you yielded completely to his suggestions. But what did He who is strong of hand do? No man enters a strong man's house to rifle his goods, unless he has first bound the strong man.<sup>51</sup> By His most holy, His most splendid power, He has reduced the devil to impotence; He has drawn His sword to shut up the way against him, in order to deliver



the poor, and the needy that had no helper.<sup>52</sup> Who indeed is your helper, but the Lord, to whom you say: *O Lord, my helper and my Redeemer?*<sup>53</sup> If you rely overmuch on your own powers, your very presumption will prove your undoing; if in another's, he will lord it over you, not come to your aid. Look for support, then, to Him alone who has both redeemed us and set us free, who has both given His own blood as ransom and made His servants His brethren.

## SECOND DISCOURSE ON PSALM 34

1. Let us concentrate on the remainder of the Psalm, begging the Lord our God to give us both health of mind to understand it, and grace to draw profit from it by good works. I think you will remember, beloved brethren, how far I went in explaining it yesterday; let us take it up again at that point. We realize that here is the voice of Christ; that is to say, the voice of Christ, Head and Body. When you hear the name Christ, you must never separate Bridegroom from bride; you must understand that great mystery: *They shall be two in one flesh.*<sup>1</sup> If two in one flesh, why not two in one voice? It is not that the Head has undergone trials here on earth, while the Body escapes; the Head, in fact, had no reason for suffering except to set an example to the Body. Our Lord suffered by His own will, we from necessity; He in His mercy, we from the nature of our being. It follows that His voluntary suffering is necessarily our consolation, so that when we happen to endure something similar, we may contemplate our Head, and forewarned by His example may say to ourselves: "If He did, what about us? And as He suffered, so must we." When the

enemy did his worst, he was only able to compass the death of the body; and he could not even destroy our Lord's body, for He rose again on the third day. What was wrought in Him on the third day will be wrought in us at the end of the world. Our hope of resurrection is deferred; is it taken away? Let us, then, recognize Christ's speech here, dearly beloved, and let us distinguish it from the speech of the wicked. They are the words of His Body suffering persecution, anguish and trials in this world. But since many suffer here on account of their sins and iniquities, we must be particularly careful to discriminate between the cause and the penalty. For a criminal's penalty may be the same as a martyr's but the reason for it may be totally different. Three men hung on a cross:<sup>2</sup> one was the Saviour, one was to be saved, and one to be damned: the same penalty for all three, but not the same cause of condemnation.

2. Allow, then, that our Head is speaking: [V. 11] *Unjust witnesses rising up have asked me things I knew not*. But we may reply to our Head: "Lord, what didst thou not know? Is there anything thou didst not know? Didst thou not know the hearts of those who asked thee questions? Hadst thou not discerned their knavery beforehand? Didst thou not with full knowledge give thyself into their hands? Hadst thou not come in order to submit to their cruelty? What was there, then, that thou didst not know?"

He knew no sin: with sin He was unacquainted; not, so to speak, by not judging it but by not committing it. We have similar everyday expressions, such as when you say: "He does not know how to stand up," meaning "He does not stand up"; and: "He does not know how to do good," for: "He does no good." "He does not know how to do

evil," for: "He does no evil." What is foreign to a man's deeds is foreign to his consciousness; what is foreign to his consciousness is evidently foreign to his knowledge. Thus God is said not to know, in the same way that craftsmanship knows no imperfections;<sup>3</sup> and yet it is by craftsmanship that things known are judged. This, then, is the reply, derived from the truth of His own Gospel, that our Head makes to us when we inquire: "O Lord, what didst thou not know? What couldst thou be asked that thou didst not know?" He makes answer: "I knew nothing of sins; and they laid sin to my charge. If you do not believe that I know nothing of sins, you will find in the Gospel that I know nothing even of the sinners themselves. I shall say to them at the end: *I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.*"<sup>4</sup> Did He not know those He was condemning? Or can any but a well-informed judge justly condemn? And yet as a well-informed judge He told no falsehood when He declared: *I never knew you.* "You are not joined to my Body, you do not abide by my laws, you are deformities."<sup>5</sup> I am the craft that knows no imperfections, in whose school if a man learns any lesson, it is not to do wrong." *Unjust witnesses rising up have asked me things I know not.* What did Christ know less than how to blaspheme? You see why He was accused of blasphemy when, questioned by His persecutors, He spoke the truth.<sup>6</sup> But who accused Him? Those of whom the Psalm goes on to say: [V. 12] *They repaid me evil for good: to the depriving me of my soul.* I have bestowed fruitfulness, they repaid me with barrenness; I have bestowed life, they death; I have bestowed honor, they insult; I have bestowed healing, they wounds; and in all they paid back, there was nothing but barrenness. It was this barren-

ness that our Lord cursed in the tree on which He found no fruit when He sought it.<sup>7</sup> Leaves there were, but fruits there were none: words, but no deeds. You see abundance of words and barrenness of deeds: *Thou that preachest that men should not steal, stealest; thou that sayest, men should not commit adultery, committest adultery.*<sup>8</sup> Such were they who charged Christ with things of which He knew nothing.

3. [V. 13] *But as for me, when they were troublesome to me, I was clothed with haircloth. I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer shall be turned into my bosom.* We are taught, brethren, that we belong to Christ's Body, since we are members of Christ;<sup>9</sup> we are encouraged in all our tribulations, not to think how we are to answer our enemies, but how we are to propitiate God in prayers, praying particularly that we may not be overcome by temptation; and lastly we pray for the spiritual cure of our persecutors and their return to justice. There is no greater or higher line of action for a man in trouble than to withdraw from the clamor of the world without and retire to the secret inner chamber of the mind;<sup>10</sup> to call upon God in the sanctuary where nobody can notice the one groaning and the other giving relief; to close the door of that chamber against all attack from without, to humble himself by the acknowledgment of his sins, to magnify and praise God alike for His reproof and His consolation. This is absolutely and in every way the best course to follow.

All I have said, however, refers to the Body, that is, to each of us: can we see any actual reference to our Lord Jesus Christ? Though we scrutinize and search through the Gospels with the utmost care, we never find that our Lord clothed Himself with haircloth in any of His sufferings and



tribulations. We do indeed read that He fasted after His baptism—we have neither heard nor read of any haircloth there—and that He fasted when the devil tempted Him, but that was before ever the Jews persecuted Him.<sup>11</sup> I repeat, our Lord was not fasting at the time when they brought charges of which He knew nothing, when they repaid evil for good, censuring, pursuing, seizing, scourging, wounding and killing Him. Nevertheless, brethren, if in all these problems we are prompted by a holy desire for knowledge to lift the veil a little and explore the inner meaning of this text of Scripture with the eager eye of our heart, we find that our Lord did indeed act thus. Haircloth is perhaps the name He uses for His mortal flesh. Why haircloth? On account of its likeness to the *body of sin*. For the Apostle says: *God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, that of sin He might condemn sin in the flesh.*<sup>12</sup> that is, He clothed His Son in haircloth, in order by this haircloth to condemn the goats. Not that there was sin, I do not say in the Word of God or, for that matter, in that holy soul and mind of the humanity which the Word and Wisdom of God had fitted to Himself in unity of Person; no, there was no sin even in that body of His. Yet there was the likeness of sinful flesh in our Lord, because death comes only from sin,<sup>13</sup> and that body was undoubtedly mortal. For had it not been mortal it could not have died; had it not died it could not have risen again; had it not risen again it could not have given us the proof and example of everlasting life. Thus death, the outcome of sin, is termed sin, just as we speak of the Greek tongue, the Latin tongue, meaning not that bodily organ itself, but what is done by its agency. For the tongue is one amid our other members, like our eyes,

nose, ears and the rest; but the Greek tongue denotes Greek words, not because the words are the tongue, but because the words are produced by the tongue. You say about someone: "I recognized his face," speaking of a part of his body; and you also say: "I recognized his hand in his absence," meaning not his bodily hand but the writing traced by his bodily hand. In the same way, then, our Lord's sin means the outcome of sin, because He took flesh from that same lump<sup>14</sup> which had deserved death on account of sin.

To express my thought briefly: Mary, sprung from Adam, died as a result of sin, Adam died as a result of sin, and our Lord's flesh, sprung from Mary, died to destroy sin.<sup>15</sup> This was the haircloth in which our Lord was clad; hence, lurking beneath it, He escaped recognition. *When they were troublesome to me*, He says, *I was clothed with haircloth*: in other words, they raged, I lay hid. Had He refused to conceal Himself, He could not have met His death, seeing that it was sufficient for one moment to put forth a minute drop—if I may call it a drop—of His power, and at His single question, *Whom seek ye?*, they all went backward and fell down.<sup>16</sup> He could not have subjected such majesty to the ignominy of His passion, had He not hidden beneath the haircloth.

4. Therefore *I was clothed with haircloth, and I humbled my soul with fasting*. Again, supposing we have grasped the meaning of haircloth, how are we to interpret fasting? Did Christ desire to eat, when He looked for fruit on the tree? Had He found it, would He have eaten it?<sup>17</sup> Did Christ desire to drink, when He said to the Samaritan woman: *Give me to drink*,<sup>18</sup> or when upon the cross He said: *I thirst*?<sup>19</sup> What did Christ hunger and thirst for, but our good works? And because He had

found no good works among the persecutors who crucified Him, He was hungry, since they repaid His soul with barrenness. How rigorous must have been His fast when He found barely one thief to refresh Him upon the cross! The apostles had fled and hidden themselves in the crowd. That very Peter, who had promised to persevere even to our Lord's death, had already denied Him three times, had already bewailed his offense, and was still lurking in the crowd, still afraid of being recognized. Finally, seeing Him dead, they all despaired of future safety. Thus He found them plunged in despair after His resurrection; when He spoke to them He found them sad and desolate, now bereft of all hope. Their feelings betrayed themselves in those who answered Him. He asked them: *What are you talking of, one with another?* They were, in fact, talking of Him: *Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, they replied, and hast not known what our chief priests and princes have done concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was mighty in work and word, how they crucified and put Him to death? But we hoped that it was He that should have redeemed Israel.*<sup>20</sup> Our Lord's strict fast would have continued, had He not refreshed those who were to appease His hunger. For He put heart into them, comforted them, strengthened them and converted them into His own Body. This was the fast, then, that our Lord imposed upon Himself.

5. *And my prayer shall be turned into my bosom.* In the *bosom* of this verse there is obviously a profound meaning; and may our Lord grant us the grace to fathom it. By the *bosom* is signified a secret. And indeed, brethren, we ourselves are hereby given the sound advice to pray within our own bosom, where God sees, where God hears, where no human eye penetrates, where none sees

but He who helps us; where Susanna prayed, and her voice, when men refused to listen to it, was nevertheless heard by God.<sup>21</sup> In what concerns ourselves, we receive pertinent counsel, but in relation to our Lord we ought to understand something further, for our Lord also prayed.

Now from an examination of the Gospel there is no question, as we know, of actual haircloth. Nor is His fasting at the time of His passion literally true; that is why I have explained both these, as far as I could, as spoken by way of allegory and similitude. But as for His prayer, we have listened to it even from the cross: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*<sup>22</sup> Yet we ourselves were also there. For when did the Father, from whom He never departed, forsake Him? We also read that Jesus prayed alone on the mountain, that He spent nights in prayer; finally that He prayed during His passion.<sup>23</sup> *Into my bosom, then, my prayer shall be turned.* I hardly know how best to understand this of our Lord; at the moment what occurs to me—perhaps later on something better will suggest itself either to me or to some wiser man—is this: *Into my bosom my prayer shall be turned.* I understand these words in the sense that within His bosom He was in possession of the Father. *God indeed was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.*<sup>24</sup> He possessed within Himself Him to whom He prayed: He was not far distant from Him, for He Himself had said: *I am in the Father, and the Father in me.*<sup>25</sup> But prayer is more particularly His work as Man, for as the Word, Christ does not pray, but answers prayers, does not beseech help for Himself, but with the Father bestows help on all. What therefore is the meaning of *My prayer shall be turned into my bosom?* Why, surely:



The humanity in myself addresses the divinity in myself.

6. [V. 14] *As a neighbor, as an own brother, so did I please; as one mourning and sorrowful, so was I humbled.* He alludes to His own Body; at this point, let us behold ourselves. When we feel delight in prayer, when the mind is tranquilized not with worldly prosperity but with the light of truth<sup>26</sup> (one who has experience of this light will understand what I am talking about), it will be able to discern and appreciate this statement: *As a neighbor, as an own brother, so did I please.* Then, it is true, the soul is pleasing to God and is at no great distance from Him. *For in Him*, says the Apostle, *we move and be:*<sup>27</sup> as brother, as neighbor, as friend. But if it is not in a condition thus to rejoice, thus to glow, thus to draw near, thus to cleave to Him, and finds itself, for this reason, afar off, the soul must act according to what follows: *As one mourning and sorrowful, so was I humbled.* When close to God, he said: *As a neighbor, as an own brother*; when remote and separated: *As one mourning and sorrowful, so was I humbled.* What is he mourning for, but what he desires and does not possess? And sometimes the same man experiences both states equally; at one time he approaches, and at another time he recedes. He draws near by the light of truth, he is separated because his flesh envelops him in a cloud. God, brethren, is everywhere and confined to no one spot. We neither approach Him nor recede from Him in local space. To approach Him is to become like unto Him; to withdraw from Him is to become unlike Him. When you see two things closely resembling each other, do you not say: "This comes near to that"? And when you are shown dissimilar things, even though they may be in the same place and often held in the same hand, you say: "This

kind is a long way from that." You hold both, you put them side by side, and you say: "This thing is a long way from that": not as regards locality, it is true, but by dissimilarity. If you desire to draw near, then, resemble Him; if you refuse to resemble Him, you will withdraw to a distance. But when you are like Him, rejoice; when you are unlike, lament, so that your lamentation may stir up desire, or rather your desire may arouse lamentation, and by lamenting you who had begun to withdraw afar off may draw near. Did not Peter draw near, when he said: *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God?* And later on this very same man retreated a great distance by saying: *Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be.* In conclusion, what did our Lord speaking as neighbor say to him when he drew near? *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona.* What did He say to him, as to one a great distance off and out of all likeness? *Go behind me, satan.* As Peter drew near: *Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee,* said our Lord, *but my Father who is in heaven:* His light has flooded you, with His light you are radiant. But when, far removed, Peter opposed the future suffering of our Lord for our salvation: *Thou savorest not,* said He, *the things that are of God, but the things that are of men.*<sup>28</sup> In another Psalm the Psalmist rightly unites these two states: *I said in my ecstasy,* he declares, *I am cast away from before thy eyes.*<sup>29</sup> He would not have spoken in ecstasy had he not drawn near; for ecstasy implies rapture. He poured forth his soul beyond itself and drew near to God; and then, cast down again to earth by the cloud and weight, so to speak, of the flesh, he recalled where he had been and beheld where he actually was: *I am cast away,* he said, *from before thy eyes.* Therefore, *As a neighbor, as an own brother, so did I*

*please*—may God grant it be fulfilled in us! But when it is not so, let this at least be true: *As one mourning and sorrowful, so was I humbled.*

7. [V. 15] *But they rejoiced against me and came together* with one accord. They were joyful, I was sad. But we have just heard in the Gospel: *Blessed are they that mourn.*<sup>30</sup> If they that mourn are blessed, shame on them that laugh. *They rejoiced against me and came together; scourges were gathered together upon me, and they knew not.*<sup>31</sup> Because they laid charges against me of which I was ignorant, they, for their part, knew not whom they were interrogating.

8. [V. 16] *They tempted me, and they scoffed at me with scorn.*<sup>32</sup> That is, they derided me, they insulted me: this includes both Head and Body alike. Observe, brethren, the present glory of the Church; look back on the abuse heaped upon it in the past. Call to mind how at one time Christians were put to flight on every side, and when discovered they were ridiculed, beaten, slaughtered, thrown to the beasts, set alight, while men sneered at them. What befell the Head also befell the Body. What was done to our Lord on the cross was likewise done to His Body throughout the recent persecution.<sup>33</sup> It continues even to this very day. Wherever they come upon a Christian, they habitually insult him, harass him, mock him, call him stupid, witless, heartless and utterly devoid of worldly experience. Let them do as they will, Christ is in heaven; let them do as they will, He has glorified the instrument of His suffering, He has now impressed His cross on all men's foreheads. The impious man is allowed to utter insults but not to inflict injury, though his words betray what lurks in his heart. *They gnashed upon me with their teeth.*

9. [V. 17] *Lord, when wilt thou look upon me? Rescue thou my soul from their wiles,*<sup>34</sup> *my only one from the lions.* For us, time is long, and this question, *When wilt thou look upon me?*, is uttered in our person. That is, when shall we see vengeance descend upon those who insult us? When will the judge, wearied and overcome, grant the widow's petition?<sup>35</sup> But in truth our Judge postpones our vindication not from weariness but from love; from sound deliberation, not from helplessness; not because He cannot aid us at this moment, but that our full number may be completed even to the very last. And yet, what do we say in our longing? *Lord, when wilt thou look upon me? Rescue thou my soul from their wiles, my only one from the lions:* that is, deliver my Church from the powers that rage against her.

10. And now, do you want to know the meaning of the term *only one*? Read what follows: [V. 18] *I will give thanks to thee, O Lord, in a great church; I will praise thee in a strong people.* Yes indeed: In a great church I will give thanks to thee; in a strong people I will praise thee. Thanksgiving, to be sure, is offered in every great gathering, but praise does not go up to God from every man in it; that the entire multitude hears our thanksgiving does not mean to say that the whole multitude praises God. This entire throng, or in other words the Church which overspreads the whole earth, is made up in fact of chaff as well as wheat: the chaff flies away, the wheat remains; therefore *I will praise thee in a strong people.* In a strong people, whom the wind of temptation does not sweep away: these are they in whom God is praised. For the chaff always provides matter for blasphemy. When people draw attention to our chaff, what do they say? "Look how Christians live, look how Chris-



tians behave," and so the text is fulfilled:<sup>36</sup> *For my name through you is blasphemed among the Gentiles.* You who are bent only on the chaff scrutinize the threshing floor unfairly and unfavorably; the grains of corn do not easily meet your eye. Seek, and you will find a strong people who will lead you to praise God. Do you really wish to find them? Be such yourself. For if by any chance you are not, it is difficult for every one else not to appear exactly like yourself. *And comparing themselves with themselves,*<sup>37</sup> as the Apostle says, they do not grasp the meaning of *I will praise thee in a strong people.*

11. [V. 19] *Let not them that are my enemies wrongfully insult*<sup>38</sup> *over me:* they sneer at me over this chaff of mine. *Who have hated me without cause:* whom I have done nothing to harm. *And wink with the eyes:* hypocrites who make pretense. [V. 20] *For they spoke indeed peaceably*<sup>39</sup> *to me.* What does *winking with the eyes* mean? Their faces simulate feelings which have no place in their hearts. And who are they that *wink with their eyes?* *For they spoke indeed peaceably to me, and in anger they devised guile.* [V. 21] *And they opened their mouth wide against me.* They began by winking with their eyes: those lions who were seeking to seize and devour began by fawning, speaking peaceful words, while in anger they plotted betrayal. What were their words of peace? *Master, we know that thou carest not for the person of any man, and teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?* Yes; they addressed me with peaceable words. What then? Didst thou not see through them, and did their winking eyes deceive thee? Indeed, He saw through them only too well, and accordingly He asked: *Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites?*<sup>40</sup> Later on *they opened their mouth wide against*

me, crying: *Crucify, crucify! They said: Well done, well done, our eyes have seen it.* And by way of further insult: *Well done, well done: Prophecy unto us, O Christ.*<sup>41</sup> Just as their peace was feigned, when they tempted Him over the money, so likewise was their praise a mockery. *They said: Well done, well done, our eyes have seen it,* they have seen thy deeds, thy wonders. This is the Christ. *If He be the Christ, let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He saved others; Himself He cannot save.*<sup>42</sup> *Our eyes have seen.* This is the sum of His boasting, that He claimed to be the Son of God.<sup>43</sup> But our Lord in His patience remained hanging on the cross: He had not lost His power, but He was showing forth His patience.<sup>44</sup> What great matter was it to come down from the cross, for One who so soon afterwards was able to rise from the sepulcher? But He would have appeared to yield to His revilers, whereas it was necessary that He should rise again and manifest Himself not to them but to His own in a great mystery, since His resurrection was the symbol of a new life, and the new life was revealed to friends, not foes.

12. [V. 22] *Thou hast seen, O Lord, be not thou silent.* What does *Be not thou silent* mean? Give judgment. Another text describes the judgment: *I have held my peace, shall I always hold my peace?*<sup>45</sup> As to the postponement of the judgment, the sinner is told: *These things hast thou done, and I was silent; thou thoughtest unjustly that I shall be like to thee.*<sup>46</sup> How can He be silent when He speaks by the prophets, when He speaks with His own mouth in the Gospels, when He speaks by the Evangelists, when He speaks by ourselves when we declare the truth? What is the explanation? He keeps silence from pronouncing sentence, not from giving laws

or proclaiming doctrine. The prophet seems to implore and predict this judgment of God: *Thou hast seen, O Lord, be not thou silent*: that is, thou wilt not be silent, for thou must needs deliver sentence. *O Lord, depart not from me*. Whilst awaiting the judgment, depart not from me, according to thy promise: *Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world*.<sup>47</sup>

13. [V. 23] *Arise, O Lord, and be attentive to my judgment*. To what judgment? Because you are suffering trials, because you are tormented with labors and pains? Do not many evildoers suffer as much? To what judgment? Are you just, merely because you thus suffer? No. Why, then? How does *my judgment* continue? *Arise, and be attentive to my judgment: to my cause, my God and my Lord*. Not to my suffering, but to my cause: not to what I share in common with the thief, but because I bear out the words: *Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake*. The distinction lies in the motive. For the penalty is the same for good and bad alike. Therefore it is not the penalty, but the cause, that constitutes a martyr.<sup>48</sup> If the penalty made martyrs, then all the mines would be full of martyrs, every fetter would shackle a martyr, every man put to the sword would be rewarded with a crown. Hence the cause must be defined. No man need say: "Because I suffer, I must be just." Because He who first suffered, suffered for justice' sake, He therefore added the essential condition: *Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake*.<sup>49</sup> Many indeed become persecutors in the interests of a good cause; and many suffer persecution to defend an evil one. If persecution could not be put to good purpose, the Psalm would not say: *The man that in private detracted his neighbor, him did I persecute*.<sup>50</sup> Thus, brethren, does not a good

and just father persecute a dissolute son? He persecutes his vices, not his person; not his own offspring, but his son's associates. When the medical man is called in to restore health, does he not often enough, as you know, come equipped with a knife? But it is against the disease, not against the patient. He cuts to heal: yet when he cuts, the sick man feels pain; he cries out, he resists, and if he is raving with fever, he even strikes the surgeon. But for all that, the latter does not cease to treat his patient, he does what he knows he must, and pays no attention to his cursing and swearing. Does one not keep in motion all those who fall into lethargy, for fear that their heavy sleep should end in death? They endure such treatment from their own sons whom they have begotten and held in the greatest affection; and yet the son is not dutiful unless he does violence to his drowsy father. Lethargic patients are kept moving, delirious ones are strapped down: simply out of love for both. Let nobody then say: "I suffer persecution." A man must not parade his sufferings but rather establish his motive; otherwise, if he does not prove his cause, he may be reckoned with the wicked. How carefully, then, how extremely well the Psalmist has made his point here: *O Lord, be attentive to my judgment*, not to my sufferings: *to my cause, my God and my Lord*.

14. [V. 24] *Judge me, O Lord, according to my<sup>51</sup> justice*, namely, according to my cause. Not according to my punishment, but *according to my justice, O Lord my God*. Judge me, in other words, according to that standard.

15. *And let them not insult over me*: that is, my enemies. [V. 25] *Let them not say in their hearts: It is well, it is well, to our mind*: We have done our utmost,



we have put to death, we have made away with him. *Let them not say: Show that they have accomplished nothing. Let them not say: We have swallowed him up.* This is why the martyrs declare: *If it had not been that the Lord was with us, perhaps they had swallowed us up alive.*<sup>52</sup> What does *they had swallowed us up* mean? They would have absorbed us. You absorb what you transfer to your own body. The world wants to swallow you up; you must swallow up the world, transfer it to your own body, kill and eat. As Peter was told: *Kill and eat.*<sup>53</sup> kill in them their own being, convert them into yours. On the other hand, if they lure you into wickedness, they will make a meal of you. It is not by persecuting you that they swallow you up, but by persuading you to be what they are themselves. *Neither let them say: We have swallowed him up.* It is you who must swallow up the body of pagans. Why the body of pagans? It wants to swallow you up; treat it as it would you. Perhaps the calf was ground up and thrown into water and given as drink, in order that the body of the ungodly should be swallowed up by Israel.<sup>54</sup> [V. 26] *Let them blush and be ashamed together, who rejoice at my evils; let them be clothed with confusion and shame:* so that we may swallow them up, covered with confusion in their shame. *Who speak evil things*<sup>55</sup> *against me:* make them blush, put them to confusion.

16. Now what of yourself, Head and members together? [V. 27] *Let them rejoice and be glad, who are well pleased with my justice:* who are united to my Body. *And let them say always: The Lord be magnified, who delight in the peace of His servant.* [V. 28] *And my tongue shall meditate thy justice, thy praise all the day long.* But whose tongue can persevere in meditating God's

praise all the day long? Why, even now you are tired out because the sermon has been somewhat lengthy. Who can manage to praise God all day long? I suggest a remedy which will enable you to praise God, if you so desire, all day long. Whatever you do, do it well and you will have praised God. When you sing a hymn you are praising God, but it matters not what your tongue is doing unless your attention is given to God's praise also. Your hymn ended, you depart to take a meal? Keep sober, and you will have praised God. Are you going home to bed? Do not rise to commit sin; then you will have praised God. Are you engaged in business? Do not defraud, and you will have praised God. Are you a farmer? Do not pick a quarrel with anyone, and you will have praised God. By the integrity of your actions prepare yourself<sup>56</sup> to praise God all the day long.

## DISCOURSE ON PSALM 35

1. I ask you, beloved brethren, to devote your attention for a little while to the text and the mysteries of this Psalm.<sup>1</sup> Let us run through it quickly, for in many places it is quite clear; but where its obscurity compels us to linger over it, you will bear with me for the sake of reaping instruction. [Verse 2] *The unjust hath said within himself that he would sin: there is no fear of God before his eyes.* He speaks not of one man but of the whole race of the ungodly, who injure their own selves by refusing to understand and live aright in consequence, and this not for lack of ability but for lack of good will. For it is one thing when a man strives to understand something and through the frailty of the flesh is unable, because as the Scripture declares in a certain place: *The*

*corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things.*<sup>2</sup> It is quite another when, what is much worse, the human heart acts against its own interests, so that what it might understand, given a good will, it fails to, not because the matter is difficult but because the will is set against it. This happens when men love their sins and hate God's commandments. For if you and your evil-doing are friends, God's word is your foe; but if you are at enmity, God's word is both friend to you and enemy to your wickedness. If you detest your wickedness, then, you ally yourself with God's word; and there will be the two of you bent on its destruction, yourself and God's word. You can effect nothing by yourself in virtue of your own powers. Only if He who has sent you His word helps you, will your wickedness be brought to nothing. Once you detest it, God has remitted it and you are at liberty, but if you are attached to it, then even to admit any criticism goes against the grain.

Suppose a man is trying to find out how the Son is equal to the Father. He has made his act of faith, he seeks to understand, but as yet he cannot. It is a truly profound subject and requires very considerable powers to comprehend; but the primary act of faith is what keeps the soul safe until it grows stronger. The soul is nourished on milk until it reaches a fit and sound state for more solid food, and can understand: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*<sup>3</sup> Before being capable of this it is nourished on faith, and it strives to understand so that it may penetrate as far as God allows. Does it need great effort to understand this: *What thou wouldst not have done to thyself, do not thou to another*<sup>4</sup>? Since you do not want to suffer

injustice, do not commit injustice; since you do not want to be caught in deceptions and snares, do not set them for another? If you fail to understand this, you are wilfully to blame. Accordingly *The unjust hath said in his heart that he would sin*: he has made up his mind to sin.

2. But does he who has determined to sin say this publicly and not rather *within himself*? Why *within himself*? Because no human being sees him. Well, I ask, even though no human being sees into this heart of his, where he resolves to sin, does not God see into it? Of course God sees into it. But what is the next statement? *There is no fear of God before his eyes*. What is before his eyes is the fear of men. He dares not make open profession of his iniquity, for fear he should perhaps be rebuked or censured by men. He slinks away from the gaze of men: whither? To his own self. He betakes himself within, and nobody sees him; the place where he plots falsehoods and mischief and evildoing is open to no human eye. Possibly he might not brood on such plans even within himself were he to reflect that God sees him; but because he has lost sight of the fear of God, once he has slipped away from men's notice to enter his own heart, whom has he to fear? Is not God there present? Yes, but *there is no fear of God before his eyes*.

3. He plots his deeds of deceit, then. Perhaps he is unaware that God can see within? This brings out what I began by saying: he is unaware, but wilfully so, because he has sinned against himself by refusing to understand. And the Psalm continues: [V. 3] *For in His sight he hath done deceitfully*. In whose sight? In the sight of One whom he fears not in his hypocrisy. *That he might find out his iniquity and hate it*.<sup>5</sup> The cheat has acted in such a way as not to find it out. There are, in



fact, some men who apparently try to discover their transgression but are afraid of finding it. For if they found it they would be told: "Give that up. You committed these things before you knew better, you committed sin while you were still in ignorance. God grants pardon. Now you have recognized it; give it up, so that your ignorance may easily obtain pardon and you may say to God without blushing: *The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember.*"<sup>6</sup>

On the one hand the man searches for it, on the other hand he is afraid of finding it; he is making a pretense of it. Supposing a man says he did not know the thing was a sin? When a person realizes it is sinful, and ceases to commit that sin which he had committed simply because he knew no better, then it is plain he really did desire to come to know his iniquity, so that he might detect and abhor it. But now many are deceivers in the very act of searching out their transgression; that is, they do not seek wholeheartedly in order to discover and detest it. And since there is deceit in the actual search, there will be a defense of the wrongdoing when found. When the man has discovered his iniquity, very well, obviously it is clear enough to him that the thing *is* iniquity. You tell him: "Do not do that." And he who was pretending to look for it has now found it and does not think it odious: so what does he reply? "Many a man does that—is there anybody who does not? And is God going to damn all of us?" Or at least he says: "If God did not condone such things, would men who do them go on living?"<sup>7</sup> Do you not see that you were making a mere show of searching for your sin? For if you had acted sincerely and not deceitfully, you would already have found it out and hated it.<sup>8</sup> But now, having brought it to light, you

are defending it; your search was mere make-believe.

4. [V. 4] *The words of his mouth are iniquity and guile: he would not understand that he might do well.* You see that the Psalmist attributes it to the will; for there are some men who have the will to understand but cannot, and there are some who lack the will to understand and therefore do not. *He would not understand that he might do well.*

5. [V. 5] *He hath devised iniquity on his bed.* Why has the Psalmist said *on his bed*? *The unjust hath said within himself that he would sin.* What he had previously termed *within himself*, he here repeats as *on his bed*. Our bed denotes our heart; it is there we face the agitation of an evil conscience, and it is there we take our rest when we have a good one. He who is fond of the bed of his heart should perform good works there. His bed is in the place where our Lord Jesus Christ bids us pray: *Enter into thy chamber and shut thy door.* What does *shut thy door* mean? Look to God not for such gifts as lie without, but for those that lie within, *And thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.*<sup>9</sup> Who is it that does not shut the door? He who begs from God such and such external things as of great moment, offering up all his prayers with the object of receiving this world's goods. Your door stands wide open for all the world to see you at prayer. What does shutting your door imply? That you should ask God for what God alone knows how to give you. What is it you wish to obtain when you close your door and make your petition? It is what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man.<sup>10</sup> And possibly it has not entered into that bed of yours, your heart. God, however, knows what He intends to give you. But when will

that be? When the Lord is revealed, when the Judge appears. For what can be clearer than His greeting to those who are to be on His right hand? *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*<sup>11</sup> Those who are on His left hand will hear these words and groan with fruitless remorse,<sup>12</sup> because while yet living they refused to do fruitful penance. Why will they groan? Because they have no opportunity for amendment. They will hear the sentence: *Depart into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.*<sup>13</sup> That makes evil hearing. The just will rejoice at their good tidings; for so is it written: *The just shall be in everlasting remembrance; he shall not fear the evil hearing.*<sup>14</sup> What evil hearing? That which those others will hear: *Depart into everlasting fire.* God, then, *who is able to do more abundantly than we desire or understand,*<sup>15</sup> asks for our secret groaning, so that we may be acceptable in His sight, and not vaunt ourselves before others, as if in self-righteousness. A man who wants to win favor with human beings on account of his own righteousness, not to the end that seeing him men may praise God, but to draw the praise to himself, does not close his door against noise; for the door stands open to the noise, and God does not hear him in the way he desires. Let us work hard, then, to cleanse the bed of our heart, so that we may be at ease there.

You know, dearly beloved, how much many men have to endure in public life from business transactions, disputes, contentions and troublesome contracts: how a man, tired out with his occupations abroad, hurries homeward to rest, trying to finish his outdoor business quickly and betake himself to the repose of his own home.

That is exactly why every one has his own home; he takes his rest there. But if even there he has to suffer annoyances, where can he rest? What is left him? It is a good thing if he can taste rest at home, at any rate. Suppose, however, he has to endure enemies outside, and perhaps a shrew of a wife at home? He sets out on business, and when he wants to find rest from external affairs he returns home; but if he can rest neither there nor anywhere else, where is he to find repose? At least in the chamber of the heart; each one of you may betake himself to the interior of his own conscience. If you find there a helpmate who causes you no vexation—I mean the wisdom of God—unite yourself with her, be at peace in your inner chamber, and do not let the smoke of an evil conscience drive you out. But the man of whom the Scripture here speaks betook himself where no man sees; and there he set his thoughts on things of such a nature that he could not be at rest even in his very heart. *He hath devised iniquity on his bed.*

6. *He hath set himself on every way that is not good.* What does *He hath set himself* denote? He has deliberately gone on sinning. In this connection we are told of the upright and godly man: *He hath not stood in the way of sinners.*<sup>16</sup> Whereas that man has not *stood* there, this man has *set himself* there. *But evil he hath not hated.* There you see the outcome, the fruit: if a man cannot altogether avoid evil-doing, at least let him hate it. So long as you hate it, you will hardly be surprised into committing any sin. Sin dwells in the mortal body; but what does the Apostle tell us? *Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof.*<sup>17</sup> When will sin cease to exist? When his words: *When this corruptible hath put on incorruption, and this mortal hath*



*put on immortality*<sup>18</sup> have been fulfilled in us. Until then, there exists in the body an attraction to evil; but greater is the delight in the loveliness of the word of wisdom, God's commandment. Overcome sin and your inclination to sin. Hate sin and malice, and so unite yourself to God who will hate it along with you. When you are conformed in mind to the law of God, you will serve with your mind the law of God. And if with the flesh you serve the law of sin,<sup>19</sup> simply because some inclinations of the flesh persist in you, they will persist no longer when your fight is done. It is one thing not to fight and enjoy true and everlasting peace, another to fight and overcome; one thing to fight and be overcome, another to be betrayed without a fight. There are men, in fact, who put up no fight, like this one of whom the Psalmist speaks; for whereas he says: *Evil he hath not hated*, how should he fight against what he does not hate? This man is made the slave of wrongdoing without a fight. There are some, however, who set out to fight, but because they rely upon their own strength, they are defeated in the battle, and when apparently beginning to lay hold on justice grow proud and are thrown headlong. God thus teaches them that in the man who subjects himself to God it is He alone who conquers. These fight but are defeated. Who is it that fights and is not defeated? He who says: *I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind*. Behold the athlete: but he does not rely on his own strength, and so he will be victorious. For how does he continue? *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God by Jesus Christ our Lord.*<sup>20</sup> He relies upon Him who commanded him to fight, and he overthrows the

enemy by the help of his Commander. But this other man *has not hated evil*.

7. [V. 6] *O Lord, thy mercy is in heaven, and thy truth reacheth even to the clouds*. I do not know what mercy of His in heaven the Psalmist is proclaiming. For there is a mercy of God on earth as well. You find it stated: *The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord*.<sup>21</sup> Of what mercy then is he speaking when he says: *O Lord, thy mercy is in heaven*? Some of God's gifts are temporal and earthly, others are eternal and heavenly. He who worships God for the sake of receiving these earthly and temporal goods, which are at hand for everybody, is as yet like a brute animal: he makes use of God's mercy, but not of that which is in a class apart, and given only to the just, the holy, the good. What are the gifts abundantly bestowed upon all? *Who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust*.<sup>22</sup> Does not every man receive this mercy of God, primarily in existing, in being distinguished from the brutes, in being a rational creature able to apprehend God, and then in enjoying this light of day, the air, the rain, the fruits, the diversity of the seasons, in enjoying earthly comforts, health of body, the affection of friends, the well-being of home life? All these things are good and are God's gifts. Do not imagine, brethren, that any one but God alone can bestow these things. There is a world of difference, it is true, between those who look for these things only from the Lord, and those who seek them either from devils, or from soothsayers or astrologers. These latter are wretched in two ways, both because they desire only earthly goods and because they do not ask them from Him who gives all good things. Those, indeed, who desire such gifts,

who would place their happiness in them, and ask God for these and nothing else, are certainly better off, in so far as they ask them of God, yet they are still running a risk. You inquire: How are they running a risk? Why, at one time they reflect on human life, and seeing that the ungodly and the wicked possess in plenty all the earthly gifts they covet, they think they have missed their reward for worshiping God, because they have no more than the wicked have, although they worship Him and the wicked do not; or at another time they see that those who worship do not possess such things, while those who blaspheme do: hence they are still exposed to danger.

8. But this man has realized what kind of mercy he must implore of God. *O Lord, thy mercy is in heaven, and thy truth reacheth even to the clouds:* the kind of mercy thou bestowest on thy saints is heavenly, not earthly; it is eternal, not temporal. And how hast thou been able to make this known to men? Because *thy truth reacheth even to the clouds*. For who could know of God's heavenly mercy, unless God proclaimed it to men? How has He proclaimed it? By sending forth His truth even to the clouds. What are the clouds? The preachers of God's word. In this connection, we read in a passage of Scripture that God was angry with a certain vineyard. I am assuming, beloved brethren, that you understand me, that you have heard Isaias telling us of that same vineyard:<sup>23</sup> *I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth thorns.*<sup>24</sup> And for fear anyone might think he was referring to some visible vineyard, he concluded: *For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the man of Juda His pleasant plant.* Hence God was rebuking the vineyard itself, which

He had expected to produce grapes, whereas it had produced thorns. And what did He say? *I will command my clouds to rain no rain upon it.*<sup>25</sup> God spoke thus in His anger: *I will command my clouds to rain no rain upon it:* and this actually happened. For the apostles were sent forth as preachers. Thus we find in the Acts of the Apostles that the Apostle Paul desired to preach to the Jews, and in place of grapes found only thorns, for they set out to return evil for good, and persecute him. And as if to carry out the sentence: *I will command my clouds to rain no rain upon it*, he declared: *To you we were sent, but because you have rejected the word of God, behold we turn to the Gentiles.*<sup>26</sup> So were fulfilled the words: *I will command my clouds to rain no rain upon it.* The truth reached to the clouds and in this way enabled God's mercy, which is in heaven and not on earth, to be announced to us. And truly do the clouds, brethren, signify the preachers of the word of truth. When God threatens through His preachers, He thunders through the clouds. When God works wonders through His preachers, He lightens through the clouds, strikes fear through them, and waters with rain. These preachers, then, through whom the Gospel of God is proclaimed, are God's clouds. Let us therefore look for mercy, but for that mercy which is in heaven.

9. [V. 7] *Thy justice is as the mountains of God, thy judgments are a great deep.* Who are God's mountains? We have just termed clouds those who are the mountains of God; for the great preachers are God's mountains. Just as the sun in its rising first clothes the mountains with light, and afterwards the light descends to the lowest levels of the earth, so when our Lord Jesus Christ came, He first shone upon the lofty height of the apostles,



He first illumined the mountains, and thus His light came down to the secluded valley of the world. And therefore we find in a certain passage in a Psalm: *I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me.* Do not suppose, however, that the mountains themselves will afford you help: whatever they give, they receive; they do not give of themselves. And if you stay on the mountains, your hope will not be unshakable: your hope and confidence must be rather in Him who sheds light upon the mountains. Help will indeed come to you from the mountains, because the Scriptures have been consigned to you through the mountains, by the great preachers of the truth; but do not set your hope in them. Notice how the Psalm proceeds. *I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me.* What then? Do the mountains give you help? Not at all. Listen to what follows: *My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*<sup>27</sup> Help comes from the mountains, but does not originate with the mountains. Whence comes it, then? *From the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

Other mountains there have been—were any man to steer his course by them he would end in shipwreck. Heresiarchs have raised themselves up and become mountains. Arius was a mountain, Donatus was a mountain, Maximian<sup>28</sup> not long ago towered like a mountain. Many men, setting eyes on these mountains and desiring the land, longing as they did to be free from the waves, have been driven against the rocks and shipwrecked on the strand. Mountains such as these never deceived him who cried: *In the Lord I put my trust; how then do you say to my soul: Get thee away from hence to the mountains like a sparrow?*<sup>29</sup>

My trust shall not be placed in Arius nor in Donatus: *My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.* Learn how much confidence to place in God and how much to allow to men; for cursed is every one who puts his hope in man.<sup>30</sup> The holy Apostle Paul, with a rare modesty and humble jealousy for the Church, as was right, jealous for the Bridegroom's sake, not for his own, shuddered at such men when they would have said: *I am of Paul, I am of Apollo;*<sup>31</sup> he preferred to take his own person as an example, so as to despise and trample on it, in order to glorify Christ: *Was Paul then crucified for you, or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*<sup>32</sup> He repulses them in order to send them to Christ. He will not have even the Bridegroom's friend usurp the Bridegroom in the heart of the bride. The Bridegroom's friends are the apostles.

John also, who was taken for the Christ, was jealous in his humility for the Bridegroom's honor. Thus he declared: *I am not the Christ, but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose.*<sup>33</sup> Clearly, in thus humbling himself he shows that he is not the Bridegroom, but the Bridegroom's friend; and therefore he says: *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice.*<sup>34</sup> Granted that the mountain is the Bridegroom's friend, yet the mountain has no light of itself; but he hears, and rejoices greatly at the Bridegroom's voice. *We, he says, have received of His fulness.* Of whose fulness? Of His who *was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.*<sup>35</sup> It was on His behalf, then, that the Apostle also kept

jealous watch over the Church, when he said: *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God:*<sup>36</sup> that is, *I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me. Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God.* But for fear your hope should once more be placed in the mountains rather than in God, listen to these words: *I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase; and: Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.*<sup>37</sup> You have already said, then: *I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me;* but because *neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth,* you must add: *My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth; and: Thy justice is as the mountains of God,* in other words, the mountains are filled with thy justice.

10. *Thy judgments are like a great deep.* The Psalmist applies the name *deep* to the depths of sin into which a man sinks by despising God, as is related in a certain passage: *God gave them up to the desires of their heart, to do those things which are not convenient.* Redouble your attention, beloved brethren. A profound truth is here in question; yes, a matter of grave concern. What is this? *God gave them up to the desires of their heart, to do those things which are not convenient.* If God, then, delivered these men over to the desires of their hearts, so as to do unbecoming things, are they therefore committing such grave sins? One might put the question in this form: If God causes them to behave unbecomingly, how far are they responsible? The statement, *God gave them up to the desires of their heart,*

is mysterious. Well then, it was the passion they refused to conquer, to which they were delivered by a chastisement of God. That they deserved to be so enslaved you can see from what the Apostle had already said of them: *Because that when they knew God, they have not glorified Him as God, or given thanks, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened.* From what cause? From pride. *For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.* And for this reason he proceeds: *God gave them up to the desires of their heart.*<sup>38</sup> Because they were self-confident and ungrateful, they deserved to be enslaved by the passions of their own heart and became a great abyss, so that they added hypocrisy to their other sins, for fear they might come to a knowledge of their iniquity and hate it. This is the very depth of wickedness, when men refuse to find it out and detest it. But observe how a man sinks to this depth: *The judgments of God are a great deep.* As the mountains of God, an expression of His justice, rise to loftiness through His grace, so likewise through His judgments do they who are drowned in the lowest pit go down to the depths. On the one hand, then, let the mountains be your desire; on the other hand, turn your back on the abyss and turn your face to what is told us: *My help is from the Lord.* On what grounds, pray? *Because I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains.* What does this signify? I will speak plainly:<sup>39</sup> In the Church of Christ you find the abyss, you also find the mountains. You find there a minority of good men, since mountains are few in number, while the abyss, that is to say, the many who by the wrath of God lead evil lives, yawns wide before you. They have acted in such a way as to be given up to the desires of their own



heart, so that now they no longer confess their sins but defend them, saying: "Why then? What have I done? So-and-So has done this and some one else that." And now they even want to make lawful what the divine word reprehends. This is the very abyss. Hence in one passage the Scripture declares—notice the reference to the depth: *The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth.*<sup>40</sup> And again: *Thy judgments are as a great deep.* But while you are not yet a mountain, neither are you yet an abyss: shun the abyss, set your face towards the mountains, but do not remain even in the mountains. For your help comes from the Lord, who has made heaven and earth.

11. *Men and beasts thou wilt preserve, O Lord; [V: 8] for so has thy mercy been multiplied, O God.*<sup>41</sup> Having said *thy mercy is in heaven*, to show that it is also on earth the Psalmist adds: *Men and beasts thou wilt preserve, O Lord, for so has thy mercy been multiplied, O God.* Great is thy mercy, O God, and manifold it is; and thou dost bestow it upon both men and beasts. From whom does man's well-being proceed? From God. And is not the well-being of beasts also from God? For He who made man made the beasts also; He who made both preserves both; but the welfare of the beasts is merely temporal. There are some men, however, who beg from God, as if it were of great consequence, what He has bestowed on the beasts. *Thy mercy has been multiplied, O God*, so that this bodily and temporal welfare, granted to men, is given not to men only but even to the beasts also.

12. Do men, then, possess something distinctive in relation to God, which the brute beasts do not merit and do not share? Indeed they do. And in what is this pos-

session to be found? *But the children of men shall put their trust under the covert of thy wings.* Weigh well, beloved brethren, this very consoling statement. *Men and beasts thou wilt preserve.* Having already spoken of *men and beasts*, the Psalmist afterwards speaks of *the children of men*: as if *men* represented one thing and *sons of men* another. Sometimes, in the Scriptures, the term “sons of men” is used of men in a broad sense, sometimes in a particular sense, with a specialized significance, so as to exclude a universal interpretation, notably when a distinction is being drawn. Not without reason, then, does the Psalmist here say: *Men and beasts thou wilt preserve, O Lord; but the children of men*—as if, leaving aside the first-named, the Lord preserves the children of men in a class apart. Apart from whom? Not merely from the beasts, but from men who seek from God the same well-being as beasts, and desire this as their main object.

Who are the sons of men, then? Those who put their trust beneath the covert of His wings. Men, so called, rejoice like the beasts in material things, but the sons of men rejoice in hope: the former, in common with the beasts, pursue present good, but these, with the angels, look for good things to come. Why then make a distinction and term the one class men and the other sons of men? For a passage of Scripture also speaks thus: *What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?*<sup>42</sup> What is *man* that thou art mindful of him? Thou art mindful of him, as of one absent; but *the son of man* thou dost visit as one present. What does *thou art mindful of man* signify? *Men and beasts thou wilt preserve, O Lord*: for thou givest well-being even to evil men and such as have no longing for the kingdom of heaven. In His customary manner He takes

care of them as though they were His cattle, and does not leave them in want. He does not leave them without provision; yet He remembers them as He would the absent. On the other hand, the one He visits is the son of man; to him is it said: *But the children of men shall put their trust under the covert of thy wings.*

And if you wish to learn the distinction between these two classes of men, you may begin by considering two men, Adam and Christ. Listen to the Apostle's words: *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.*<sup>43</sup> We are born of Adam, to die; we rise again through Christ, to live forever. When we bear the likeness of the earthly man, we are men; when we bear the likeness of the heavenly man, we are sons of man; for Christ was called the Son of Man.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Adam was man, but not the son of man; hence those who desire corporal good things, and prosperity in this life, belong to Adam. I urge such men to become sons of men, trusting under the covert of God's wings and desiring that mercy which is in heaven and has been proclaimed by the clouds. But if they cannot rise to this, for the time being they must look for even temporal goods from none but the one God, so that serving Him according to the Old Testament, they may yet attain to the New.

13. The Jewish people, it is true, desired earthly goods and the supremacy of Jerusalem, the subjection of their enemies, abundant crops, their own welfare and that of their children. Such were the things they wanted and such they received; they were *kept under the Law.*<sup>45</sup> They desired of God the good things He gives even to cattle, for the Son of Man had not yet come to them to make them sons of men; yet already they had the clouds proclaiming the Son of Man. The prophets had

come to them announcing Christ, and there were some among them, at any rate, who understood and cherished the hope of one day receiving the mercy which is in heaven. There were others among them who longed for nothing but bodily comforts with earthly and temporal bliss. These men's feet slipped so far that they fashioned or at any rate worshiped idols. When God rebuked them, when He used their very pleasures as instruments of chastisement,<sup>46</sup> when He withdrew them, they suffered famine, wars, pestilences, diseases, and they betook themselves to idols. Such good things of seeming importance as they should have implored from God, they sought from idols, and forsook God. For they observed that the ungodly and the wicked enjoyed an abundance of those very goods they themselves coveted, and concluded that they were worshiping God in vain because He was not bestowing an earthly reward. Why, man! You are God's workman; the time for receiving your wages is hereafter: why are you clamoring for your pay already, before you have done your work? If a workman came to your house, would you pay him beforehand, while his work was still undone? You would consider he was acting the wrong way round if he said: "First I will take my pay, and then I will do my work." You would be angry. Why? Because he would not trust you, a man capable of deception.<sup>47</sup> How can you expect God not to be angered, when you do not trust Him who is the very Truth? What He has promised, He will give: He does not deceive, for He who has promised is Truth. But you are afraid perhaps He may not have it to bestow? He is almighty. Do not fear there may be no one to give it: He is immortal. Do not fear He may be replaced by some one else: He abides forever; you may be free



from anxiety. If you would have your workman trust you the whole day, do you put your confidence in God all your life long; for your life is but a moment of time in God's sight. And when you do, what will you be? *The children of men shall put their trust under the covert of thy wings.*

14. [V. 9] *They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house.* The Psalmist promises us something ineffably great. He wishes to give it utterance and does not; is it that he cannot, or that we do not grasp it? I make bold to say, my brethren, even of those holy tongues and hearts through whose agency the truth has been proclaimed to us, that what they proclaimed is beyond either speech or thought. Great and beyond expression is the reality; and they themselves have caught a glimpse of it obscurely. *We see now in part, so the Apostle declares, in a dark manner, but then face to face.*<sup>48</sup> And yet notice, obscurely as they saw, they burst forth into speech like this. What shall we be like when we see face to face what they, laboring at heart, could not bring forth in speech for human beings to grasp? What was it that forced from the Psalmist the words: *They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house?* He was looking for a word from human experience to use in speaking; and since he beheld men soaking themselves in drink, taking wine to excess and losing their reason, he saw the image to use. For when that joy beyond words is attained, the human mind passes away, so to speak, and becomes divine, and it is inebriated with the plenty of God's house. Hence the expression in another Psalm: *Thy chalice which inebriated me, how goodly it is!*<sup>49</sup> This is the chalice which inebriated the martyrs when, going forth to their passion, they did not recognize their own kins-

folk. What greater drunkenness than not to recognize weeping wife, children or parents? And yet they did not recognize them, they did not realize they were before their eyes. Do not be surprised; they were intoxicated. What had made them so? Why, they had laid hold on the cup that inebriated them. Hence the Psalmist gives thanks to God, saying: *What shall I render to the Lord for all that He hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.*<sup>50</sup> So then, brethren, let us be sons of men, and let us put our trust beneath the covert of His wings and be inebriated with the plenty of His house. I have put it into words as best I can; I see according to my ability, but give utterance to what I see I cannot. *They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure.* Torrent is the name for a rushing stream of water. The stream will be God's mercies, flowing to refresh and inebriate those who now put their trust beneath the shadow of His wings. What is this *pleasure*? A torrent to inebriate the thirsting. Let him who thirsts, then, have confidence. Let him who thirsts cherish hope, for when satisfied he shall possess the reality; until he possesses the reality, he must thirst in hope. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.*<sup>51</sup>

15. From what spring, then, will you be refreshed, and whence flows this mighty torrent of His pleasure? [V. 10] *For with thee*, says the Psalmist, *is the fountain of life.* Who but Christ is the fountain of life? He has come to you in the flesh, to moisten your parched throat: He who has given a foretaste to the thirsty will satisfy the trusting to the full. *For with thee is the fountain of*

*life, in thy light we shall see light.* Here a fountain is one thing and light another; not so there. For what is a fountain is also light: you call it whatever you choose, for it is not really what you call it. You cannot find a fitting name; it is not limited by any one epithet. If you were to say that it is light alone, you might be told: "To no purpose, then, have I been bidden to hunger and thirst; for who is there that eats light?" What was said to me, clearly enough, was this: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.*<sup>52</sup> If He is light, let me prepare my eyes. Make ready your mouth too, for what is light is also a fountain: a fountain because it refreshes the thirsty, light because it gives sight to the blind. In this life it may happen that a light is in one place and a fountain in quite another. For instance, sometimes fountains flow in darkness; and sometimes in the desert you suffer from the sun and find no fountain. Here, then, these two things can exist apart; but there you will not feel weariness, for He is the fountain; you will not be in darkness, for He is the light.

16. [V. 11] *Extend thy mercy to them that know thee, and thy justice to them that are right in heart.* As I have often told you, those are right of heart who in this life follow the will of God. It is sometimes God's will that you should be well and sometimes that you should be sick. If God's will is sweet when you are well and bitter when you are sick, you are not right in heart. Why? Because you do not want to conform your will to God's will, but to bend God's will to yours. His will is straight, yours is crooked; your will must be brought into line with His, not His bent to suit yourself: and then you will have a right heart. If the things of this world go well, let God be blessed who gives comfort;

if the things of this world go amiss, let God be blessed because He corrects and proves: and you will be right in heart as you say: *I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall always be in my mouth.*<sup>53</sup>

17. [V. 12] *Let not the foot of pride come to me.* Now the Psalmist had already said: *The children of men shall put their trust under the covert of thy wings, and shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house.* When any one begins to be very plenteously refreshed from this wellspring, he must beware of growing proud. From this danger Adam, the first man, was not immune; on the contrary, the foot of pride came to him, and the hand of the sinner, in other words, the proud hand of the devil, moved him. For even as he who seduced him said of himself: *I will set my throne towards the north,*<sup>54</sup> so likewise he persuaded Adam, saying: *Taste, and you shall be as gods.*<sup>55</sup> Through pride, then, we have so fallen as to arrive at this perishable state of mortality. And since it was pride that had wounded us, it is humility that heals us. God came in humility, to heal man of pride's grievous wound. He came, for *the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*<sup>56</sup> He was taken captive by the Jews, He was made to suffer insults. You have heard, during the reading of the Gospel, what they said, and to whom they said: *Thou hast a devil.*<sup>57</sup> And yet He did not reply: "It is you that have a devil, for you are abiding in your sins, and the devil possesses your hearts." No, He did not say this, which would have been the truth had He said it. But it was not the time to say such a thing. Far from proclaiming the truth, He might have seemed merely to return the insult. He let pass what He heard as though He had not heard it. For He was a physician, come to heal a delirious patient. Just as the physician cares



nothing for what he hears from a raving man, but only how the latter may become sound once more in mind and body—he cares nothing even if attacked by the patient, upon whom he inflicts new wounds to cure the long-standing fever—so also our Lord came to a sick man, a man raving in delirium; He came determined to disregard whatever He might hear or suffer. Thus by this very means He gave men a lesson in humility; He instructed them in humility to cure them of pride. It is from this pride the Psalmist implores to be delivered when he says: *Let not the foot of pride come to me, and let not the hand of the sinner move me.* For if the foot of pride approaches, the hand of the sinner is put in motion. What does the hand of the sinner signify? The working of a seducer to evil. Have you become proud? He who persuades to evil will soon corrupt you. Hold fast to God in all humility, and you will not care overmuch what is said to you. This explains what we find elsewhere: *From my secret sins cleanse me, and from those of others spare thy servant.*<sup>58</sup> *From my secret sins—* what does the phrase mean? *Let not the foot of pride come to me. And from those of others spare thy servant.* What does this signify? *And let not the hand of the sinner move me.* Keep safe what is within, and you will have no fear for what is without.

18. But why so terrified of pride? It seems as if the response, [V. 13] *There all the workers of iniquity are fallen*, were given to show that they have come to that deep of which it has been said: *Thy judgments are a great deep*; they have sunk to that abyss to which haughty sinners are fallen. *Are fallen*: what first caused their fall? The foot of pride. Listen; note the *foot of pride*: *When they knew God, they have not glorified Him as God.*

The foot of pride, then, touched them, and thereupon they sank to the abyss: *God gave them up to the desires of their heart, to do those things which are not convenient.*<sup>59</sup> The Psalmist feared both the root of sin and its head, when he prayed: *Let not the foot of pride come to me.* Why has he called it the foot? Because pride has led man to forsake and depart from God. His foot denotes his passions. *Let not the foot of pride come to me, and let not the hand of the sinner move me.* That is to say, let not the works of the sinner separate me from thee and make me desire to imitate them. But why is it against pride that the Psalmist says: *There the workers of iniquity are fallen?* Because every wicked man to-day has fallen through pride. Hence when warning the Church to be vigilant, the Lord spoke thus: *She shall watch thy head, and thou her heel.*<sup>60</sup> The serpent is watching when the foot of pride approaches you, so that when you falter he may throw you headlong. But do you keep your eye on his head: *pride is the beginning of all sin.*<sup>61</sup> *There the workers of iniquity are fallen: they are cast out and could not stand.* First of all, he who did not stand firm in the truth, and afterwards, through his agency, those whom God banished from Paradise. So it fell out that the man who in his humility declared himself unworthy to loose the latchet of a shoe was not driven forth; on the contrary, he stands and hears Him, and rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice—not because of his own, for fear the foot of pride should run against him and he should be driven forth and be able to stand upright no longer.

19. And if I have wearied some of you with my task, we have now finished the Psalm, your weariness is at an end, and we can be glad the whole Psalm has

been expounded. Fearing to overburden you, I thought of breaking off in the middle; but I reflected that our concentration would be snapped, and we should not recommence at the second half to the same effect as if we ran through the whole at once. So I preferred to tire you, rather than to leave the subject unfinished and hold back the remaining portion. I owe you another sermon tomorrow again. Pray for me that I may be able to provide it, and come with burning thirst and fervent hearts.

### FIRST DISCOURSE ON PSALM 36<sup>1</sup>

1. With what terror the approach of the Last Day strikes the ears of men who refuse the security offered by virtuous living and are persistently bent upon a life of sin! For our good, however, God has decreed that the day shall remain unknown, so that the heart may be ever ready in anticipation of what it knows must surely come, though it knows not when. After all, our Lord Jesus Christ was sent to be our Master, yet He declared that even the Son of Man was ignorant of that day,<sup>2</sup> because it was no part of His office as Master to acquaint us with it. Now the Father knows nothing that the Son does not know, since the Father's very knowledge is identical with His wisdom, and His wisdom is His Son, His Word. But because it did not behoove us to know all that He undoubtedly knew—He had come to teach us, but not to teach what was not expedient for us to know—as Master He not only instructed us in some matters but likewise withheld others. For, as Master, He knew both how to teach what was for our benefit and to leave unsaid what was for our injury. And so the Son, after a manner of speaking, is said not to know what He does

not teach: to put it in ordinary language, as I have explained, He is said to be ignorant of what He purposely leaves unknown to us. Thus we call a day joyful because it makes us joyful; and a day sad because it makes us sad; and frost sluggish because it makes us sluggish. Conversely the Lord says: *Now I know*.<sup>3</sup> Abraham was told: *Now I know that thou fearest God*. God had known it before ever He put it to the test. But that specific test was applied in order that we too might realize something that God already knew, and that what He knew before there was any visible proof might be written down for our instruction.<sup>4</sup> Possibly also, Abraham himself had as yet no idea of the exact strength of his faith, for it is only by being put to the test, so to speak, that a man really comes to the knowledge of what he is. So Peter too had certainly no idea of the strength of his faith when he said to our Lord: *I am with thee unto death*.<sup>5</sup> But our Lord, who knew him through and through, having His finger, as it were, on the pulse of his heart, foretold where he would fail and pointed out his weakness to him beforehand. It was then that Peter, vainglorious whilst yet untried, learned under his trial to know himself. Thus it is not unreasonable for us to suppose that our father Abraham too appreciated the strength of his faith only when, being commanded to sacrifice his only son, he neither wavered nor winced in making the offering to the God who had bestowed him. For even as he could not imagine how God was to give that son as yet unborn, so he trusted that He could restore him when sacrificed. God therefore said: *Now I know* in the sense: "Now I have made you know." Just as in the expressions I have already quoted, a sluggish frost because it makes us sluggish, and a joyful day because it makes



us joyful, so the word "know" is used because it makes us know. This explains that phrase: *The Lord your God trieth you, that He may know whether you love Him.*<sup>6</sup> For you would surely attribute to the Lord our God, the Supreme and very God, crass ignorance—and that, you realize, would be an undoubted sacrilege—were you thus to interpret *The Lord your God trieth you, that He may know*, as if He had no previous conception, but gained His knowledge by putting us to a test.

What then is the force of *He trieth you that He may know*? He tries you in order that you yourselves may know. Now apply this principle of interpretation in the opposite sense. Just as when you hear God say: *I know*, you understand by it: "I have made you know," so too when you hear it said of the Son of Man, in other words Christ, that He knows not that day, you must conclude it means that He causes us to remain ignorant of it. But what do I mean by "causes us to remain ignorant of it"? He keeps it secret, so that what would profit us nothing to have revealed should remain concealed. I have said this already: the good Master knows what to impart and what to withhold, just as we read of His having postponed certain things. From this we deduce that not everything is to be disclosed if the hearers are not equal to grasping it. For He says elsewhere: *I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot bear them now.*<sup>7</sup> The Apostle also says: *I could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal; as unto little ones in Christ I gave you milk to drink, not meat: for you were not able as yet; but neither indeed are you now able.*<sup>8</sup> What is the drift of my words? This: since we realize that the Last Day will come—it is well for us that we know it will come, and it is also well that we do not know

when—we must keep our hearts in readiness by leading a good life, so that far from fearing its advent, we may even desire it. For as that day increases the woe of the unfaithful, so it puts an end to that of the faithful. As yet, before it comes, you have the power to decide which class you will belong to; once it has come, this will be beyond you. Choose, therefore, while there is time; for what God in His mercy conceals, He in mercy delays.

2. Now, in any specific walk of life not all are found trustworthy, nor all untrustworthy; this is evident from the conclusion drawn in regard to the several categories of men just set before us in the Gospel parables: *One shall be taken, and one shall be left.*<sup>9</sup> The good man will be taken, the bad man left. Two men are seen in a field: their occupation is identical but not their hearts. The occupation is apparent to men; the heart is open to God. Whatever, therefore, the field may represent, *One shall be taken, and one shall be left.* It is not as if half of it is to be taken and half left: no, it speaks of two classes of men. Even if one class comprises few, the other many, yet *One shall be taken, and one shall be left:* in other words, the one category will be taken, the other left. As in the bed, so at the mill. You are probably waiting to know their real meaning, for obviously it is shrouded and wrapped up in various enigmas. I may interpret in one sense, someone else in another. Yet in offering my own explanation, I raise no objection to another man's making a better one; nor need he object if I accept both, so long as both are in accordance with faith.

It seems to me, then, that the laborers in the field denote the Church's prelates, as the Apostle says: *You are God's husbandry; you are God's building.*<sup>10</sup> He calls himself, for

instance, both an architect, when he says: *As a wise architect, I have laid the foundation*, and also a husbandman: *I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase*.<sup>11</sup> In the mill, however, he spoke of two women, not two men; I imagine that this metaphor refers to the laity, inasmuch as the prelates govern, the laity are governed. Moreover the mill presumably denotes this world, seeing that it revolves, as it were, on the wheel of time and crushes its devotees. There are men, then, who do not forsake worldly occupations, yet even there some do well, others ill. Some make unto themselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, that they may be received by them into everlasting dwellings.<sup>12</sup> These are told: *I was hungry, and you gave me to eat*; others leave these things undone and are told: *I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat*.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, since some of those occupied with the business and employments of this world are devoted to helping the needy while others are not, so of the two women at the mill, *One shall be taken, and one shall be left*. Now the bed signifies rest, I presume, seeing that there are men unwilling to bear the brunt of work in the world as do married men who have houses, servants and children; nor do they perform any active work in the Church like the prelates who are compared to laborers in husbandry; but as if considering themselves too feeble for such services, they retire into leisure and love a quiet life; mindful of their own weakness, they do not embark upon mighty deeds, but beseech God, so to speak, on a bed of sickness. This walk of life too has its really good men and its counterfeits, and from these also *one shall be taken, and one shall be left*. Whatever the mode of life you adopt, be pre-

pared to put up with counterfeits; otherwise, if you are unprepared, you will meet with what you never expected, and you will either give over or be thoroughly shocked.<sup>14</sup> You are trained to face every contingency by Him who speaks to you while it is His time for speaking and not yet for judging, and yours for listening and not yet for fruitless remorse. For as yet repentance is not in vain: it will be vain hereafter. Not indeed that men will not hereafter rue their evil lives, but on no account does God's justice restore to them what by their own injustice they have forfeited. For *it is a just thing with God*<sup>15</sup> that at present He should bestow mercy, and hereafter execute judgment. Hence no secret is made of it during this life, is it? I allow any man to contradict me and find fault, if this lesson of Scripture is not recited and chanted the whole world over; if, moreover, copies are not constantly on sale in public places.

3. But what really troubles you, Christian men, is that you see folk of evil lives prospering, surrounded with an abundance of things such as these: they enjoy good health, they hold positions of outstanding dignity, their whole household is safe and sound, you see the happiness of their family, the flatteries of their dependants, their paramount influence, their lives unmarred by any sorrow. You see their foul behavior, you look at their unbounded affluence, and your heart protests that divine judgment does not exist, all things come and go by chance, and are tossed about by the whirligig of fortune. "For if God took notice of human affairs," you say, "could that man's wickedness flourish, and my innocence suffer?" Each disease of the soul has its own remedy in the Scriptures. The man whose ailment is such



that he says that kind of thing in his heart, should drink the antidote contained in this Psalm. What? Shall we glance once more at what you were saying? "What did I say," you reply, "other than what you see for yourself? The wicked flourish, the good suffer: how can God look on at such things?"

Now lift up the cup and drink. He of whom you make these complaints has Himself mixed this remedy for you. Only do not reject this most health-giving draught. Apply the lips of your heart by listening, and drink in the words you hear: [V. 1, 2] *Be not emulous of evildoers, nor envy them that work iniquity. For they shall shortly wither away as grass, and as the herbs of the meadow shall quickly fall.* What seems long to you, to God is short. Subject yourself to God and it will become short to you too. What the Psalmist calls *grass* we are to understand also by the *herbs of the meadow*. They are of no account, they live on surface soil and strike no deep root. Hence they are green throughout winter, but when the summer sun begins to scorch, they will wither away. Now is the season of winter, your glory is not yet apparent. But if your charity is deeply rooted, like many trees in winter, the cold passes away, and the summer, the Day of Judgment, will be at hand: then shall the greenness of the grass wither away, then shall appear the glory of the trees. *For you are dead*, says the Apostle, just as trees during the winter; they appear as if withered and dead. Well then, what hope have we, if we are dead? The root is deep within: where our root is, there is our life also, for there is our charity. *And your life*, he continues, *is hid with Christ in God.* When shall a man thus rooted wither? But when will our spring arrive? When

our summer? When shall the glory of foliage clothe us with vesture and a harvest of fruits be our adorning? When shall this come to pass? Hear what follows: *When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory.*<sup>16</sup> What then of the present? *Be not emulous of evildoers, nor envy them that work iniquity. For they shall shortly wither away as grass, and as the herbs of the meadow*<sup>17</sup> *shall quickly fall.*

4. And what are you to do? [V. 3] *Trust in the Lord.* For the other men's trust is not in the Lord: their hope is perishable, it will prove fleeting, frail, ephemeral, transitory, vain. *Trust in the Lord.* "I assure you I do trust, what is my next step?" *And do good.* Eschew the evil that you see in those who flourish in their wickedness. *Do good, and dwell in the land,* for you might possibly do good and yet not dwell "in the land." For the Lord's land is His Church. The Father Himself is the husbandman<sup>18</sup> who waters and tills it. Many in fact seemingly perform good works, but because they do not dwell in the land, they do not belong to the husbandman. Do good therefore, not beyond its boundaries, but dwell for your part within the land. "And what advantage shall I gain?" *Thou shalt be fed with its riches.* What are the riches of that land? Her riches are her Lord, her riches are her God. He it is to whom it is said: *Thou art my portion, O Lord.*<sup>19</sup> He it is of whom it is said: *The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup.*<sup>20</sup> In a recent discourse,<sup>21</sup> beloved brethren, I pointed out to you that God is our possession and at the same time we are God's possession. Hear how He is Himself the riches of this land; note what follows: [V. 4] *Delight in the Lord.* As if you were making inquiries and had said: "Show me the riches of that land in which

you bid me dwell"; *Delight in the Lord*, he says, and *He will give thee the requests of thy heart*.

5. You must understand the real force of *the requests of thy heart*. Draw a distinction—draw it as clearly as you can—between the requests of your heart and the requests of your flesh. The phrase *the God of my heart*<sup>22</sup> in a certain Psalm is used of set purpose. For it then goes on to say: *And my God that is my portion forever*. A man, for instance, who suffers from bodily blindness prays for eyesight. Let him pray for such gifts, because they are God's handiwork also, and God graciously grants such prayers; but these things form the petitions even of the wicked. This is a request of the flesh. A man lies sick and begs for healing: at the point of death he is restored to health. That too, like all such, is a request of the flesh. In what does a request of the heart consist? Just as the request of the flesh would have a man's eyesight restored to him to enable him to behold the light which eyes of that kind can behold, so the request of the heart is directed towards another kind of light. For *Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God*.<sup>23</sup> *Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart*.

6. Why, that is my longing, my prayer, my desire, you reply. Shall I, unaided, accomplish it? No. Who shall, then? [V. 5] *Commit thy way to the Lord and trust in Him, and He will do it*. Place your suffering before Him, place before Him your desire. What in fact is your suffering? *The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh*.<sup>24</sup> What is your desire, therefore? *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* And because He Himself is the doer, when once you have committed your

way to Him, notice what follows: *The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord.*<sup>25</sup> What does He intend to do, therefore, since it is written: *Commit thy way to the Lord and trust in Him, and He will do it?* What will He do? [V. 6] *And He will bring forth thy justice as the light.* For at present your justice is hidden: it is a matter of faith, not yet of vision. You believe a certain thing and act on it, you do not yet behold the object of your faith. But when you enter upon the vision of what you have believed, your justice will be brought forth into the light, because your justice was your faith. For *the just man liveth by faith.*<sup>26</sup>

7. *And He will bring forth thy justice as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday;* broad daylight, that is to say. It was not enough to say *as the light*. For we already call it light at daybreak, we call it light also at sunrise; but never is the light clearer than at midday. Therefore He will not merely *bring forth thy justice as the light*, but *thy judgment shall be as the noonday*. For you now decide to follow Christ: this is your ambition, this your choice, this your *judgment*. No one has shown you what He has promised; at present you hold fast to His promise but you yet await His fulfilment of it. According to the judgment of your faith, therefore, you have chosen to pursue what you do not see. Your decision concerns something not visible and for the time being is censured and derided by unbelievers: "What have you believed? What has Christ promised you? To give you immortality and everlasting life? Where is it? When is He to give it? When can it possibly be?" In spite of all this, you judge it preferable to follow Christ promising you what you do not see, rather than a wicked man who abuses you for your belief



in something which is not yet before your eyes. This then is your judgment; its value is not at present obvious. In this world it is always night, so to speak. When then shall He *bring forth thy judgment as the noonday? When Christ shall appear, who is our life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory.*<sup>27</sup> When the Day of Judgment comes, and Christ comes and gathers together all nations unto judgment, what will happen? Where shall the ungodly hide his unbelief when my faith becomes vision? Very well; but what for the present? Hardships, troubles and trials. And blessed is the man that endures, because *he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.*<sup>28</sup> He must pay no attention to scoffers, for fear that preferring to flourish here he should finally prove to be grass instead of a tree.

8. Then what ought I to do? Listen to your duty: [V. 7] *Be subject to the Lord and pray to Him.* Let your life consist in this: obedience to His commands. For this is to be subject to Him and to pray until He bestows what He has promised. There must be ceaseless good works, ceaseless prayer, for *we ought always to pray and not to faint.*<sup>29</sup> How do you show subjection? By doing what He has commanded. But you are not yet in receipt of recompense because possibly you are not yet equal to it. For He has power to give at this moment, but you have not the ability to receive. Exercise yourself in good works, labor in the vineyard and at the close of day ask for your wages. He is faithful who has brought you into the vineyard.<sup>30</sup> *Be subject to the Lord and pray to Him.*

9. "Believe me, I am doing so: I am subject to the Lord; I do pray to Him. But how do you explain this? That wicked neighbor of mine commits sin and flour-

ishes. I know all about his thefts, his adulteries, his robberies. He holds a proud position among men, he is haughty, and in his ill-gotten dignity he does not even deign to recognize me. How am I to put up with it?" Now this is a disease, drink its antidote! *Envy not the man who prospereth in his way.* Yes, that man is prospering, but in his own way; you are in trouble, but in God's way. He meets with prosperity on the way, misery at the end of the way; you with toil on the way, happiness at its close, for *the way of the wicked shall perish. The Lord knoweth the ways of the just, and the way of the wicked shall perish.* The paths you tread are known to the Lord, and though you have to trudge along, they are not misleading you. The way of the wicked, however, is but a fleeting happiness: the end of the way spells the end of their happiness. Why? Because it is the broad way whose end leads to the depths of hell. Yours, it is true, is the strait way, and few enter upon it,<sup>31</sup> yet you should set your mind on the spacious place they finally reach. *Envy not the man who prospereth in his way.* [V. 8] *Because of the man who doth unjust things, cease from anger and leave rage.* Why do you fume and fret? Why do your anger and indignation lead you to blaspheme, or very nearly so? *Because of the man who doth unjust things, cease from anger and leave rage.* Are you unaware in what direction that anger is goading you? You are on the point of telling God that He is unjust; that is where it is leading. "I ask, why is this man happy, and that man unhappy?" Notice to what it gives birth: smother the wicked conception in its infancy. *Cease from anger and leave rage;* returning to your senses you will then declare: *My eye is troubled through indignation.*<sup>32</sup> Which eye, but the eye of faith?

To the eye of your faith I put the consideration: You have believed in Christ; upon what grounds have you done so? What has He promised you? If Christ has promised you the happiness of this world, find fault with Christ, find fault with Him, I say, when you see the unbeliever happy. What was the kind of happiness He promised you? What except that attained in the resurrection of the dead? On the other hand, what has He promised during this life? His own lot. His own lot, I repeat. Or is it that you, servant and disciple, scorn the selfsame lot as your Lord and Master's? Do you not hear Him say: *The servant is not greater than his Lord, and the disciple is not above his Master?*<sup>33</sup> For your sake He suffered afflictions, scourging, reproaches, the cross and death. Which of these did the Just One deserve? Which of them did you, a sinner, not deserve? Well then, keep your eye in the right direction, for fear that anger should deflect it: *Cease from anger and leave rage; have no emulation to do evil*, or you will be modeling yourself on the man who by his ill-doing flourishes for the moment. *Have no emulation to do evil.* [V. 9] *For evildoers shall be cut off.* But I can see that they are happy. Believe Him who says *they shall be cut off*. He sees clearer than you, anger has no power to blur His vision. *For evildoers shall be cut off, but they that wait upon the Lord*—that wait, not indeed upon some deceiver, but solely upon Truth itself; not indeed upon some weak human being, but solely upon the Almighty—*they that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the land*. What land, but that Jerusalem whose lovers, aflame with desire, shall finally attain to peace?

10. But how long is the sinner to flourish? How long am I to endure it? You are in a hurry; but what seems

tardy to you will soon come to pass. It is your weakness that makes what is really short seem interminable. Do we not find the same thing in sick men's fancies? Nothing takes such an unconscionable time as the preparation of a drink for a thirsty patient, no matter how quickly his nurses are to forestall the invalid's fuming. "When will it be finished? When will it be heated? When am I going to get it?" Your nurses make all haste, but your sickness imagines that what is being done as promptly as possible is very long drawn out. Notice therefore our Physician's gentle response to the sick man's query: How long am I to endure? How long is it to last? [V. 10] *For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be.* You weep among sinners, I know; you weep over the sinner. *A little while and he shall not be,* for fear that because I told you: *They that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the land,* you should imagine the waiting is to be very protracted. Wait a little while, and what you are awaiting you shall receive forevermore. *Yet a little while:* ever so little.

Pass in review the years from Adam up to this very day, peruse the Scriptures: it seems but yesterday that he fell from Paradise. So many centuries have been measured out and rolled away. Where are the past ages? In like manner shall the few that remain surely pass. Had you lived the whole time, from the moment Adam was driven from Paradise until this present day, you would undoubtedly hold the view that your life, flown so fast, had not been a lengthy one. What indeed is the span of any single man's life? Pile on all the years you please to the very limits of extreme old age—what does it amount to? Is it not a mere breath of morning air? Well then, even supposing the Day of



Judgment when just and unjust receive retribution is far off: your own last day certainly cannot be far off. Make ready for it: the state in which you depart this life will be the state in which you enter upon the other life. After this short life you will not yet attain to the future state of the saints who are to hear: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*<sup>34</sup> You will not yet be there; who does not know that?<sup>35</sup> But you may already be where that beggar, once full of sores, was seen at rest afar off by the proud and worthless rich man in the midst of his torments.<sup>36</sup> Secure in that repose, you await with complete confidence the Day of Judgment on which you are to receive your body as well, and be transformed so as to be equal to an angel. So what does it all amount to when we restlessly ask: "When will it come? Is it far off?" This will be the query of our sons, this too the query of our sons' sons; and although in process of time each one will repeat the same words, the little while that yet remains vanishes, in exactly the same way as all the past has already vanished. O poor sick man! *Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be.*

11. *And thou shalt seek his place and shalt not find it.* He gives his reason for saying *shall not be*: it is not because the sinner is to be no more, but because he will no longer fulfil any useful purpose. For if he were to cease altogether to exist, he would not be tormented; with the impunity thus afforded, the wrongdoer would then say: "I shall do whatever I like so long as I am alive; there is no afterlife for me." Will the man who should suffer pain, the man who should suffer torments, cease altogether to exist? Then what becomes of: *De-*

*part into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels?*<sup>37</sup> “But it is possible,” you reply, “that when cast into that fire they will be no more and will be utterly consumed.” They would not then be told: *Depart into everlasting fire*: had they no future existence, they would not find it everlasting. At all events, our Lord has made no secret of the prospects in store for them, and whether they are to meet with complete annihilation or with pain and torture: *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*<sup>38</sup> Now how shall they weep and gnash their teeth, if they have no being? In what way, therefore, are we to interpret the verse: *Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be*, except in the sense given by the Psalmist in the following line: *And thou shalt seek his place and shalt not find it*? What is the force of *his place*? His purpose.

Indeed, has a sinner any purpose? Undoubtedly. God uses him here to prove the just man, as He used the devil to prove Job, as He used Judas to betray Christ. During this life, therefore, the sinner has his uses. This then is his place, just as the place for chaff is in the goldsmith’s furnace. The chaff burns in order to refine the gold: even so, the evildoer rages in order to prove the just. But when the time of our probation is over, when there are no more human beings to prove, there will be none through whose agency they may be proved. Because I have said “There will be no human beings to prove,” do I mean those men will cease to exist? No; but because henceforth there will be no need of sinners to prove the just, *thou shalt seek his place and shalt not find it*. Go in search of the sinner’s place at the present moment. You will find it. God has made him a scourge and has given

him both honor, yes, and power as well. At times He does clearly so act: He allows a sinner power which results in the violent dislocation of human affairs and the correction of the virtuous. That sinner will be paid his due reward; and yet he has been made the source of the virtuous man's advancement and the ungodly man's fall. *Thou shalt seek his place and shalt not find it.*

12. [V. 11] *But the meek shall inherit the land.* The land is that which we have often discussed, Jerusalem the holy, which is to be set free from this wayfaring life and to live with God and through God forevermore. Therefore *They shall inherit the land.* What are their delights to be? *And they shall delight in abundance of peace.* Let the wicked man find his delight here in abundance of gold and silver, abundance of slaves, abundance, in a word, of palm groves, rose trees and choice wines, of most splendid and sumptuous banquets. Is this the power you covet? This the flower that delights you? Even if it were to last forever, would it not still be a matter for tears?

But what are your delights to be? *And they shall delight in abundance of peace:* peace, your gold; peace, your silver; peace, your property; peace, your life; peace, your God. Peace will fulfil your every desire. For what is here gold cannot become your silver; what is wine cannot become your bread; your light cannot become your drink also. Your God shall be all to you. He will be your meat, that you hunger not; your drink, that you do not thirst; your enlightening, that you be not blind; your stay and support, that you do not falter. Himself whole and entire, He will possess you whole and entire. You will not feel cramped for space in possessing Him with whom you

possess all else besides. You shall have all and He shall have all, because you and He shall be one. This complete whole will be His who possesses you. These are the [V. 37] *remnants for the peaceable man*. We have been singing this verse; it occurs in this Psalm a good way further on, it is true, from what we are now discussing, but since we have chanted it, we may very well conclude with it. Only be full of confidence.

*Keep innocence*: it is a precious treasure. Suppose you want a certain thing and so you steal it. Compare what you are reaching out to, and what you are robbing. On the one hand you want to acquire, on the other you are losing: acquiring money, losing innocence. Rather let your heart keep watch: do you who were ready to acquire wealth and lose your innocence, choose rather to go without the wealth. *Keep innocence, and give heed to direction*. For God will guide you so that whatsoever may be His will shall be yours also. That is what is meant by direction. But if you refuse God's will you will be crooked and your deformity will not allow of your being brought into line with Him who is Rectitude. *Keep innocence, therefore, and give heed to direction*. Never imagine that because this life is no more, man likewise is no more, for *there are remnants for the peaceable man*.

## SECOND DISCOURSE ON PSALM 36<sup>1</sup>

1. We have been called upon, beloved brethren, to resume the exposition of this Psalm, and it is our bounden duty to comply. For the Lord has been pleased to delay our departure by reason of the torrential rains, and since we have your welfare constantly at heart, as you have



ours, we have received injunctions not to remain silent, but while we are here to say something for your benefit. We have already set before you, however, what God asks of us in this Psalm, what He would teach us, what persuade, what we must guard against, what endure and what hope. Now you know there are two categories of men in this world, just and wicked, and during this life they are intermingled. Each class has its own particular ambition of soul. The race of just men strives to reach the heights through self-abasement, that of the wicked sinks into the depths through self-exaltation. The one abases itself and rises as a result, the other exalts itself and consequently falls. So it comes about that one class must endure, and the other be endured. Furthermore it is the object of just men to win over the wicked themselves to eternal life, whereas the object of the wicked is to render evil for good and, if possible, to deprive even of mortal life the very men who are anxious for them to reach life everlasting. For the sinful are a burden to the upright, and the upright to the sinful; they are mutually insupportable. No one doubts that these two classes are irksome one to the other, but they are so from different causes. The reason why the evildoer finds the good man an annoyance is because the latter would not have him an evildoer: in his prayers and works he is set upon his becoming virtuous. But the evildoer's hatred for the good is such that he would not have him exist at all, let alone be virtuous. For the greater the virtue of the one, the greater the vexation to the other's sinfulness. Moreover he strives to make him a sinner too, if possible; but if he fails, he must get rid of him and remove him from a position in which he is an eyesore and a grievance. Yet even if

he makes him a sinner, nevertheless he will still annoy him. For the upright man is not the only one to offend the evildoer; in fact, two evildoers can scarcely endure each other. When they seem on terms of mutual affection, they are exchanging evil confidences, not friendship. Hence they are of one mind only when plotting the innocent man's destruction; it is not that they love each other, but that they join in hating a man whom they ought to have loved. It is in reference to this kind of man that the Lord our God enjoins upon us forbearance and that feeling of charity taught by the Gospel, wherein our Lord bids us: *Love your enemies and do good to them that hate you.*<sup>2</sup> The Apostle likewise says: *Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good.*<sup>3</sup> Make war against an evil man, but from virtuous motives. That is truly honorable warfare, or rather, the struggle is a wholesome one, when a good man is pitted against an evil one, instead of two evil men against each other.

2. Now return to the Psalm. The first part has already been discussed. These verses now follow: [V. 12, 13] *The sinner shall watch the just man, and gnashes upon him with his teeth. But the Lord shall laugh at him.* Laugh at whom? Why, surely at the sinner gnashing his teeth at the just. But why *shall the Lord laugh at him?* For *He foreseeth that his day shall come.* He is the personification of fury as he threatens the just, unaware of his own turn on the morrow. But the Lord looks on and *foreseeth his day.* What day? That on which He *will render to every man according to his works.*<sup>4</sup> For he is treasuring up for himself *wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God.*<sup>5</sup> Yet the Lord foresees it although you do not, and He who foresees it has told you of it. You yourself did not know

that the wicked man's turn should come when he would be requited with punishment, but He who does know has not concealed it from you.

It is no small part of knowledge to ally oneself with a man who truly possesses it. God beholds with all-seeing eyes: look to it that yours are all-believing. What God contemplates, you must accept on faith. For the day of the wicked which God foresees will surely come. Which day? The day of vengeance on each one. For needs must vengeance fall upon the wicked, it must needs fall upon the evildoer whether he turn towards God or away from Him. For if he turn towards God, the very fact that his wickedness is come to an end is itself vengeance on him. Did not the Lord laugh to foresee the days of two evildoers, Judas the traitor and Saul the persecutor?<sup>6</sup> He foresaw the one's day for punishment, the other's for conversion to justice. Vengeance was executed upon both: the one was consigned to hell-fire, the other smitten to earth by a voice from heaven. Therefore, you also must look with eyes of faith upon the sinner you have to endure, and with God foresee his day. When you perceive him infuriated with you, say to yourself: "Either he will be converted and share my company; or, if he persists in evil-doing, I shall see no more of him."

3. What then? Will the wickedness of the evildoer injure you and leave him unscathed? Can it be that the malice which bursts forth out of his fury and hatred to outrage you, should not first of all ruin his own inmost self before it attacks you in the open? His aggression merely ill-treats your body; his sinfulness rots his own very soul. For whatever he launches against you rebounds upon his own head; his persecution purifies

you and blackens himself. Which, then, does it injure the more? Very well; in his fury he has stripped you of your goods. Who incurs the heavier penalty, the man who forfeits his money, or the man who forfeits his faith? Those gifted with inward vision know exactly how much grief each loss calls for. Gold, to be sure, glitters in the sight of many, while faith has no glitter. They have eyes, true enough, that can see the gold, no eyes to discern faith. If they had, they would surely account it the more precious. And yet when someone breaks faith with them, they raise a storm, they bear a grudge: "Faith indeed!" they cry. "Where is faith to be found?" You value it sufficiently to demand it of others; value it sufficiently to set an example of it yourself!

Since, therefore, all who persecute the just incur a heavier loss and are visited with a direr calamity, inasmuch as their own very inward soul is laid waste, the Psalm goes on to illustrate the consequences: [V. 14, 15] *The wicked have drawn out the sword; they have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, to kill the upright of heart. Let their weapon enter into their own hearts.* It is easy for his weapon, that is to say, his sword, to reach your body, as the sword of persecutors reached the bodies of the martyrs: the body was pierced through, yet the heart remained unscathed; but the heart of the man who drew his sword against the righteous man's body obviously did not. This very Psalm tells us so. *Let their weapon*—it does not say it is to enter into their bodies, but—*Let their weapon enter into their own hearts.* They have set their hearts on killing a man's body, let them undergo the death of the soul. For those whose bodies they were bent upon destroying have been fore-



armed by our Lord when He told them: *Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul.*<sup>7</sup> What kind of power is it which enables a man to rage with the sword and kill no more than the body of his foe and yet kill his own soul? They are out of their wits, it is against their own selves they are raging, they are madmen unable to see themselves; just as if someone were to thrust his blade through his own frame in order to rip another man's garment. Your eyes are fixed on your target and not upon what you have transpierced to reach it: you have rent his clothes and your own flesh. It is evident, then, that the damage and injury the wicked inflict upon themselves far exceed the injury they think they have inflicted upon those they hate. Therefore *Let their weapon enter their own hearts.* It is the Lord's verdict and cannot be otherwise. *And let their bow be broken.* What does *let their bow be broken* signify? Let their tricks be frustrated. He had previously said: *The wicked have drawn out the sword; they have bent their bow.* By the unsheathing of the sword the Psalmist wishes to imply open hostility; and by the bending of the bow, secret conspiracy. His sword, you see, strikes himself and his carefully laid schemes are thwarted. What do I mean by "thwarted"? They do the upright man no harm. How, you ask, have they done no harm, for instance, to a man whom they have thus impoverished, reduced to dire need by depriving him of his goods? He still has grounds for singing: [V. 16] *Better is a little to the just than the great riches of the wicked.*

4. But wicked men wield power, and not only are their activities manifold but they command the means to gain their ends; they carry all before them, obedience

follows hot upon their bidding. But shall it always be so? [V. 17] *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken in pieces.* Now their arms signify their power. What is he going to do in hell? The same as the rich man did who, when he dwelt in the upper regions, feasted sumptuously, and when he went to the nether regions was tormented? I say then, *the arms of the wicked shall be broken in pieces. But the Lord strengtheneth the just.* How does He strengthen them? In what words? In the words quoted in another Psalm: *Expect the Lord: do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord.*<sup>8</sup> What do the words *Expect the Lord* mean? For a time you must toil, for eternity you shall rest from toil; passing short your hardships, everlasting your bliss; a little while your anguish, and afterwards joy without end. But are you on the point of sinking under your hardship? You have before your eyes the example of Christ's sufferings. Look at what He underwent for you, He who had no cause for suffering. However sore your affliction, you will never undergo those insults, those lashes, that robe of shame, that crown of thorns; and finally you will never undergo that cross, forasmuch as the cross has now been removed from the list of human penalties. Whereas in olden times criminals were crucified, nowadays no man is fixed to a cross. The cross is honored and finished with: finished as a punishment, abiding as a glory. From the place of execution it has passed to the foreheads of emperors. What must He keep in store for His own faithful, who has invested His very sufferings with such honor!

By these facts, then, these words, these considerations, by this His example, *the Lord strengtheneth the just.* Let sinners rage as much as they can and may—*the Lord strength-*

*eneth the just.* Whatever befalls the upright man he should ascribe to the divine will, not to the power of his foe. The latter may threaten, but without God's consent, strike he cannot. And if it please God to let him strike, He knows perfectly well how to succor His own: *For whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth; and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.* Why, I ask, should the evildoer congratulate himself because my Father has utilized him as a scourge? He is employed to do service; I am being trained for my inheritance. We should consider, not how much He concedes to the unjust, but how much He holds in reserve for the just.

5. But even for men who are instruments of our chastisement, it is our duty to desire that they should be converted and chastised in their turn. Thus indeed did God discipline His own faithful ones. He had made use of Saul as His scourge, but afterwards He converted Saul also. And when the Lord told the holy man Ananias, who baptized the aforesaid Saul, that he must welcome him because he was a vessel of election, Ananias, fearful and shuddering at the common report of Saul the persecutor, made answer: *Lord, I have heard of this man, how great persecutions he hath done to thy saints in Jerusalem; and now he cometh having received authority, that wheresoever he shall find any that invoke thy name, he may seize and bind them, and bring them before the chief priests.* And the Lord replied: *So be it; I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*<sup>9</sup> I will requite him, He says, I will revenge myself upon him, and he shall suffer for my name's sake, who at present rages against my name. I am chastening or have chastened others by this means; I shall now use

others to chasten him also. This was accomplished, and we know how many sufferings Saul underwent, more by far than he had dealt out to others. Like a grasping creditor he recovered what he had advanced with usury.

6. But consider whether this present verse of the Psalm: *But the Lord strengtheneth the just*, finds its fulfilment in his case. When suffering many hardships, *Not only so*, declares that same Paul, *but we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope, and hope confoundeth not: because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.*<sup>10</sup> This is well said; it is obvious he is now just, now strengthened. As, therefore, once he was strengthened, those who persecuted him could do him no harm, so neither did he to those he was persecuting. *But the Lord*, says the Psalmist, *strengtheneth the just*. Listen to further declarations of this man now strengthened and just: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or persecution?*<sup>11</sup> How fast he must have clung who was not to be separated by things such as these! *But the Lord strengtheneth the just*. Certain prophets had come down from Jerusalem and being filled with the holy Spirit they foretold to this same Paul the many sufferings awaiting him in Jerusalem. One of them accordingly, Agabus by name, having loosed Paul's girdle bound it round himself, as the custom is, in order prophetically to indicate future events in these symbols. *Even as you see me bound*, he said, *so must this man be bound in Jerusalem*. The brethren, however, considering that Saul, or Paul as he now was, had been warned by the prediction, set to work to dissuade him from risking his life amid perils so great, and



by advice and entreaty they sought to induce him not to go to Jerusalem. But he was already numbered among those of whom it is said: *The Lord strengtheneth the just. Why*, he replied, *do you afflict my heart?* I do not hold my life dear. In fact, he had already told those whom he had begotten in the Gospel:<sup>12</sup> *I most gladly will spend myself for your souls.*<sup>13</sup> *For I am ready*, he declares, *not only to be bound, but to die also for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>14</sup>

7. To resume: *The Lord strengtheneth the just.* How does He strengthen them? [V. 18] *The Lord knoweth the ways*<sup>15</sup> *of the undefiled.* When suffering misfortunes, they are believed by the unenlightened, by men incapable of recognizing the ways of the guiltless, to be treading evil paths. He who does know those ways, knows the straight path along which to lead His own meek servants. That is why the Psalmist declares elsewhere: *He will guide the mild in judgment; He will teach the meek his ways.*<sup>16</sup> Can you not imagine how the passers-by cursed the beggar covered with sores as he lay at the rich man's gate?<sup>17</sup> In all probability, how they held their noses and spat at him! But the Lord knew how to hold paradise in store for him. And he, on the other hand, longed to live the life of the man clothed in purple and fine linen who feasted sumptuously every day. But the Lord who foresaw the latter's turn coming, knew of his future torments, knew that those torments would be without end. I say then, *The Lord knoweth the ways of the undefiled.*

8. *And their inheritance shall be forever.* This we take on faith. Does the Lord also take it on faith? The Lord knows these things with a clarity so distinct that it is beyond our reach to describe, even when we are made

equal to the angels. For the things to be revealed will not show forth as plainly to us as they show forth to Him who is incapable of change. Yet what are we told even of ourselves? *Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is.*<sup>18</sup> There is obviously, then, some kind of blissful vision reserved for us; and if at present only a partial glimpse may be caught *through a glass in a dark manner*,<sup>19</sup> yet the radiant beauty of that beatitude which God stores up for them that fear Him, which He perfects for them that hope in Him,<sup>20</sup> utterly transcends the power of speech. It is for this that our hearts are being trained in all the hardships and trials of this life. Do not feel surprise at being schooled amid toil: you are being schooled for a wondrous destiny.

This explains the cry of the just man who has been strengthened: *The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.*<sup>21</sup> What is that glory of ours to come, unless it be equality with the angels, and the vision of God? What a gift is bestowed on a blind man by one who restores his eyesight so that he can see the light of day! When cured, the man can find nothing sufficiently worthy to repay his healer; however much he gives, indeed, what gift can equal that which the other has bestowed? Desiring to give as much as he can, he will give him gold, yes, even masses of it; but the other has given him light! If the one would realize that he is repaying absolutely nothing, he should look at his gift in pitch darkness. And as to ourselves? What shall we give to that Physician who heals our inward sight and enables us to behold that very light eternal which is Himself?

What are we to offer Him? Let us consider and find it if we can, and amid our anxious searching let us exclaim: *What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?* What reply is found? *I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.*<sup>22</sup> Can you drink the chalice, He asks, *that I shall drink?*<sup>23</sup> And afterwards to Peter: *Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep,*<sup>24</sup> for whose sake Peter was to drink the Lord's chalice. *The Lord strengtheneth the just. The Lord knoweth the ways of the undefiled, and their inheritance shall be forever.*

9. [V. 19] *They shall not be confounded in the evil time.* What is the meaning of *They shall not be confounded in the evil time?* In the day of afflictions and disasters they shall not be put to shame as the dupe of a false hope is put to shame. Who is put to shame? The man who says: "I have not realized my hope." And justly so: for you were looking for it from yourself, or from some human friend of yours. *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.*<sup>25</sup> You are put to shame because your hope has played you false, it was built on falsehood, for *Every man is a liar.*<sup>26</sup> If however you set your hope on your God, you are not put to shame, because He in whom you have set it cannot be deceived.<sup>27</sup> Hence, when that man strengthened in his justice, whom I praised a little while ago, has fallen upon evil days in the time of affliction, what has he to say to prove he was unashamed? *We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope, and hope confoundeth not.* How comes it that *hope confoundeth not?* Forasmuch as it is fixed on God. So he continues: *Because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.*<sup>28</sup>

The Holy Ghost has already been given to us; how can He whose pledge—and such a pledge!—is already in our possession delude us? *They shall not be confounded in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be filled.* For even here on earth they meet with a certain satisfaction of their needs. The days of famine are clearly the days of this life: while others go hungry, they are filled. For instance, on what grounds could he glory who said: *We glory in tribulations*, were he suffering inward starvation? Outwardly straitened to human eyes, he yet enjoyed inward spaciousness.

10. On the other hand, what does a bad man do when he first experiences affliction? He has no outward relief, he has been deprived of all that; his conscience offers no comfort. He has no refuge without, for all is grievous; nothing which affords refuge within, for all is wickedness. He deserves the fate that follows: [V. 20] *Because the wicked shall perish.* For how can those whom no place will hold avoid perishing? Consolation is to be found neither in things without nor in things within. For those things from which we derive no comfort are outside ourselves. And all who are not in possession of God, who are slaves of money, friendship, renown, the amenities of the world and every kind of bodily well-being, are beyond the reach of comfort from within. They cannot be comforted as he could who, filled with interior riches, spoke out of his abundance, and burst forth with: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord.*<sup>29</sup> For these sinners, then, there can be no refuge in things without, since it is precisely in them that they endure afflictions; their conscience offers them no comfort: they are not at ease inwardly, for it



is impossible for a sinner to enjoy inward ease. After all, an evil man, whoever he may be, is at odds with himself: he is necessarily racked with self-inflicted torments, for the man whom his own conscience tortures is his own punishment. He may escape an enemy by turning wherever opportunity offers, but where can he turn to escape his own self?

11. It so fell out that a member of the Donatist faction came to us, accused and excommunicated by his own party, seeking here what he had lost there. But we could only receive him in the rank open to him;<sup>30</sup> for he had not seceded from the party as one considered irreproachable of life who was obviously leaving from choice, not compulsion. Since, then, he could neither enjoy among them what he was looking for, seeing that he was in search of empty pride of place and false distinction, nor recover here what he had forfeited there, he was all undone. He smarted beneath the wound and was inconsolable, stabbed as he was in conscience with pains that were hidden yet horrible. We tried to console him by quoting the word of God, but he was not of the number of the wise ants who during the summer have hoarded their winter livelihood.<sup>31</sup> For when life moves serenely is the time for a man to harvest God's word and store it away in his own inmost heart, just as the ant buries in the furthest recesses the produce of her summer toil. There is clearly time to do this throughout the summer, but winter draws near: tribulation, in other words, supervenes, and unless he can find something within himself to live on, the man must necessarily die of hunger.

As I was saying, then, this man had not hoarded up for himself the word of God; winter came, and he did not find here what he sought. His only possible consolation lay

in getting what he aimed at, for God's word afforded him absolutely none. His heart was void within, and without he could not find what he wanted. He was ablaze with burning grief and indignation, his mind was in a turmoil, for a long time in secret, until finally, unknown to himself, he burst out with sundry groanings in the hearing of the brethren. We looked on and God knows our heartbreaking grief over such agony of soul, such excruciation, such hells, such torments. Need I say more? Unable to endure the humble position which, had he been wise, would have proved the making of him, his conduct was such as to lead to his expulsion. This should not cause us, brethren, to despair of others who possibly have made a free choice of the truth and have not been driven to their action. So far from there being any need to despair of the rest, I should not even despair of this man as long as life is in him. For of no living man need we ever despair. And in case anybody may tell you something different, beloved brethren, you should be assured of this truth from the following incident. One of their deacons, without any inquiry being set on foot against him on their part, chose Catholic peace and unity, and quitting their company came to us. He came in all sincerity as one deliberately choosing what is good, not as one repudiated by the wicked. His reception has led us to rejoice in his conversion and we recommend him to your prayers. Truly God is mighty: may He grant him to go from strength to strength in virtue. As for the rest, we must never pass judgment on any man either one way or another, whether for good or evil. As long as this life lasts, we are always uncertain what tomorrow may bring. *They shall not be confounded*

*in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be filled, because the wicked shall perish.*

12. *And the enemies of the Lord, immediately after they shall be honored and exalted, shall come to nothing and vanish like smoke.* You must appreciate the inference implied from the comparison used. Smoke bursts forth wherever there is a fire and shoots up into the sky; by the very act of rising it swells out into a huge cloud. The bigger the cloud, however, the more unsubstantial it becomes; from its very size, which lacks foundation or density and is merely suspended and inflated, it passes into thin air and disperses, so that you realize its very size is its undoing. For the higher it mounts, the further it spreads, the greater expanse it covers, the more it melts away, dissolves and is lost to view. *And the enemies of the Lord, immediately after they shall be honored and exalted, shall come to nothing and vanish like smoke.* Of such men has it been said: *As Jannes and Mambres resisted Moses, so these also resist the truth, men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith.* How do they resist the truth if not by their turgid and swelling pride? They arrogantly assume that they are great and just men when they are on the point of vanishing into thin air. And what is said of such men? Exactly what is said of smoke: *But they shall proceed no farther; for their folly shall be manifest to all men, as theirs also was.*<sup>32</sup> *And the enemies of the Lord, immediately after they shall be honored and exalted, shall come to nothing and vanish like smoke.*

13. [V. 21] *The sinner shall borrow and not pay again.* He receives and makes no return. What does he not return? Thanks. For what does God ask of you, or what does God require that is not to your profit? And how

many things has the sinner not received without making any payment! He has received existence, he has received the being of man together with all the difference which separates him from brute creation; he has received bodily form, he has received in his body distinct senses, eyes for seeing, ears for hearing, nostrils for smelling, a palate for tasting, hands for touching, feet for walking; his very bodily health is a gift. All the aforesaid gifts, however, we share in common with beasts. Man has received even more: he has received a mind capable of understanding, capable of truth, capable of discerning right from wrong, capable of searching after and longing for its Creator, of praising and cleaving to Him. All these gifts has the sinner also received, but by failing to lead a good life he fails to make due return. And so *the sinner shall borrow and not pay again*: he will not repay Him from whom he has received, he will not return thanks. On the contrary, he is sure to return evil for good, blasphemies, murmurings against God, indignation. Thus such a man *shall borrow and not pay again; but the just showeth mercy and shall lend*. The one, you see, is possessed of nothing, the other is possessed of something.

Notice the destitution on the one hand, the wealth on the other. The one receives and makes no payment, the other shows mercy and lends; his means are ample. What if he is poor? Even so he is rich. Do you but look with sympathetic insight and you will see his riches. You tend to regard his empty purse, in fact, without regarding the conscience filled with God. He has no wealth without, but he has charity within. Charity can be drawn upon as often as you like and is never exhausted. Even though a man may have outward re-



sources, it is still charity that acts, albeit through the means at his disposal. If, however, he cannot find anything outward to give, he shows kindness, he offers advice if he can, if possible he lends help; and if, in the last resort, he is unable to assist either by counsel or support, at least he relieves him in desire, at least he prays for his fellow sufferer, and it may be that he is granted hearing more readily than the man who bestows bread. One whose heart is full of charity has always something to give. What is termed charity is also termed good will. God asks no more of you than He has inwardly bestowed. Good will cannot, in fact, lie idle. If you lack good will, even though you have money to spare, you do not stretch out your hand to the poor; yet they, poor as they are, do one another kindnesses out of good will: they are not unfeeling towards one another. You notice a blind man led by one who can see. Since the latter is in want himself and has no money to give, he has lent his eyesight to one deprived of it. What led him to lend his faculties to one bereft of them if not because good will, the treasure of the poor, dwelt in his heart? It is a treasure replete with sweetest rest and real security. A thief cannot enter to purloin it, fear of shipwreck there is none. An inward possession is in a man's safekeeping; he escapes with his bare skin, and yet is filled with plenty. *The just showeth mercy, therefore, and shall lend.*

14. [V. 22] *For such as bless Him shall possess the land for an inheritance.* They shall possess, for instance, the Just One, the only truly Just One who truly justifies, Him who on earth was both a poor man and yet came laden with great bounty wherewith to enrich those whom He found poor. For He it is who has endowed

the hearts of the poor with the Holy Spirit, and souls purged by confession of sin He has filled with the riches of justice. He it is who had power to make a fisherman rich by casting aside his nets,<sup>33</sup> making no account of what belonged to him, in order to set heart on what did not belong to him. *The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the mighty things.*<sup>34</sup> It was not by an orator that He gained the fisherman, but by the fisherman He gained the orator, by the fisherman He gained the senator, by the fisherman He gained the emperor. *For such as bless Him shall possess the land for an inheritance.* They shall be coheirs with Him in that land of the living of which it is said in another Psalm: *Thou art my hope, my portion in the land of the living.*<sup>35</sup> Thou art that portion of mine, he tells God; he has had no hesitation in making God his portion. *They shall possess the land for an inheritance, but such as curse Him shall perish.* That those who bless should bestow blessing is, however, a free gift granted to them. For He came to men who were revilers, transforming them into men of blessing. So it has come about that such as cursed Him have already perished, since by His grace they have been changed into men who bless Him. Once in their depravity they cursed Him whom now in His goodness they bless.

15. Notice what follows: [V. 23] *By the Lord shall the steps of a man be directed; and he shall like well His way.* To make a man like the Lord's way, the Lord Himself directs his steps. For if the Lord did not direct man's steps, so erring by nature are they, inevitably they would go astray and from long continuance in crooked paths find it impossible to return. But our Lord Himself came; He called us; He redeemed us; He shed

His blood. This was the price He paid, this the good He wrought and the evil He suffered. Consider Him in His deeds: He is God; consider Him in His sufferings: He is Man. Who is that God-man? If you, O man, had not forsaken God, God would never have become Man for your sake. For what use would it have been to you that He had made you man—whether you were deserving of it or not—if He had not also assumed human nature for your sake?<sup>36</sup> It is indeed He Himself who has directed our steps in order that we should delight in His way. *By the Lord shall the steps of a man be directed; and he shall like well His way.*

16. Now when you set forth on Christ's road, do not promise yourself success in this world. Hard were the paths He trod, mighty His promises. You must follow. Do not fix your mind so much on the route as upon the goal you are to reach. You will endure temporal hardships but you will arrive at joys everlasting. The way to endure the toil is to keep your eyes fixed on the reward. So the laborer in a vineyard would faint and fail, did he not look to what he was to receive. But when you look to what you are to receive, all your sufferings will seem paltry and as nothing in comparison with what you are to get in return. You will be astounded at so much being given for such very little effort. Why, brethren, to gain everlasting rest, surely you must be ready to undergo everlasting labor; if you are to receive everlasting bliss, you should equally endure everlasting woes; but if the labor you had to endure were everlasting, when would you arrive at everlasting bliss? Thus your tribulation must needs be finite, so that when it is ended, you may attain to happiness without end. All the same, brethren, a long period of tribulation might

have been demanded as the price of eternal bliss—I mean that as our happiness is to be endless, so our wretchedness, our toil and our tribulation might have been protracted. For instance, suppose they were to last a thousand years. Weigh a thousand years against eternity: how can you set a finite quantity however great against the infinite? Ten thousand years, a million, yes, go further if we can, a billion years that have an end, cannot be compared with eternity. Furthermore, consider that it is God's will that your labor should be not only temporal but also short-lived. The span of a man's whole life is but a few days. Even were the smooth and the rough not intermingled—though the smooth undoubtedly occurs oftener and lasts longer than the rough, and hard times are the briefer and the rarer on purpose that we may be able to endure—even were man's entire life, I say, to be spent in toiling and sorrowing, in anguish, in torments, in bonds, in wounds, in hunger and thirst all the day long, hour after hour, throughout his whole life even to old age, the sum total of man's life is still but a few days. When the toil is over, there will come an everlasting kingdom, bliss without end, there will come equality with the angels, there will come Christ's inheritance, there will come Christ, to share it with us.<sup>37</sup> How great the reward we receive for how little toil! Veterans who endure the hardships of military service and spend so many years in exchanging blows, enlist in the army in boyhood and quit it as old men. In order to enjoy a few peaceful days in their declining years, when the weight of those same years begins to tell on men no longer crushed by war, how many hardships they undergo, what marches, what wintry cold, what broiling heat, what dire extremities, what wounds, what perils! And in suffering all these,



they look forward to nothing but those few quiet days of old age, without being certain that they will ever reach them.<sup>38</sup> To return—*By the Lord shall the steps of a man be directed; and he shall like well His way.* As I began by saying, if you wish for Christ's way, if you are a true Christian, and the true Christian is one who does not scorn the way of Christ but wishes to follow it through his sufferings, seek to go by no other road than that by which He went. It may seem a rough road but it is a safe one; the other possibly has its delights but it swarms with robbers. *And he shall like well His way.*

17. [V. 24] *When he shall fall he shall not be distressed, for the Lord strengtheneth his hand.*<sup>39</sup> Notice what delight in Christ's way implies. Should a man happen to suffer some trial, some disgrace, some outrage, some affliction, some injury, or one of the many evils to which human nature is heir in this life, he sets his own Lord before his eyes, he reflects upon the multitude of His trials and sufferings; *when he shall fall*, therefore, *he shall not be disturbed, for the Lord*, who has suffered before him, *strengtheneth his hand.* For what have you to fear, man, when your steps are so directed as to lead you to delight in the way of the Lord? What have you to fear? Physical pain? Christ was scourged.<sup>40</sup> Insolence? He was told: *Thou hast a devil*,<sup>41</sup> He who was casting them out. Or possibly you fear intrigue and the plots of wicked men? They plotted against Him.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps you are unable to prove that your conscience is clear on the score of some accusation, and you are forced to suffer because the evidence of false witnesses is accepted against you. They bore false witness against Him in the first place, not only before His death but also after His resurrection.<sup>43</sup> False witnesses were suborned to secure

His condemnation by the tribunal; afterwards the guards at the tomb came forward as false witnesses. He rose with a mighty wonder: the trembling earth proclaimed its Lord's rising. On that spot earth stood guard over earth, but it was a much harder earth which would take no impression. It reported the truth but was misled by falsehood. Those guards did indeed relate to the Jews what they had seen and all that had befallen. They thereupon received a bribe with the instruction: *Say you, His disciples came and stole Him away when you were asleep.*<sup>44</sup> Notice the false witnesses even against His resurrection. But the utter blindness of false witnesses, brethren, the utter blindness! False witnesses are constantly afflicted with this utter blindness: they unwittingly contradict themselves and so make it quite obvious that their witness is false. How did they actually contradict themselves? While we were asleep, *His disciples came and stole Him away*. What proof is this? Who is giving evidence? A man who was asleep. To such men's tales I for one would pay no heed, not even if it were only their dreams they were retailing to me. Stupid madness! If you were awake, why did you allow it? If you were asleep, how do you know of it?<sup>45</sup>

18. It is the same, as you must realize, with these their posterity.<sup>46</sup> I must not neglect this opportunity of speaking, for the more we aim at their salvation, the more are we bound to stress their untrustworthiness. Here you have the Body of Christ meeting with false witnesses; the Body has to endure what has already befallen the Head. It is not to be wondered at; even at present there is no lack of men who address the Body of Christ spread throughout the whole world as "brood of traditors."<sup>47</sup> You are bearing false witness. A few words will suffice

me to convict you of bearing false witness on such a charge. You tell me: "You are a traditor." I reply: "You are a liar. But neither at any place nor time do you prove me a traditor, yet here and now, from your very own words, I unmask your lie. It is an established fact that you declared we were sharpening our swords; I reply by citing the Proceedings of your Circumcellions.<sup>48</sup> It is an established fact that you declared that you assert no claim to things taken from you; I reply by citing the Records where you employed an agent to exact the dues. It is an established fact that you declared:<sup>49</sup> 'We offer the Gospels alone.' I reply by citing the various rulings of your judges, upon which you based your persecution of those separated from you; I cite your petition to the apostate emperor: you informed him that nothing but justice found a home in his breast.<sup>50</sup> Does Julian's apostasy seem to you part and parcel of the Gospel, pray? You see, I maintain you are a liar. What charge have you brought against me that is entitled to credence? Even if I should find no evidence to prove your actual words false, it would suffice that I should prove yourself a liar. What are you saying? As each is, so are all.<sup>51</sup> You did well to send such messages to all concerned: you wanted a pack of liars to keep you company, for fear you should have to blush for the lie all by yourself."

19. But the verdict of our fathers against Caecilian, it is objected, should hold good. Why should it hold good? Because they that delivered it were bishops. Let the principle laid down by the Maximianists<sup>52</sup> hold good against you too. In the first place—I believe you are fully aware of the fact—the bishops in league with Maximian, who was as yet this man's deacon, came to Carthage.

Their Tractatory tells us so, a Tractatory which they even coupled with their official Records when they<sup>53</sup> were engaging in a lawsuit over a house with the agent of the man<sup>54</sup> who never asserts a claim to anything taken from him. First of all, then, they circulated the Tractatory concerning him, complaining that he would not present himself before them—this formed their chief complaint. Notice how God has paid them in their own coin for their indictment of Caecilian. The coincidence is striking; in God's design, after all these years, the wheel is come full circle: they are faced with the past. It is impossible for them to find the slightest excuse for evasion or loophole of escape. They might plead that they had clean forgotten the past: God does not allow them to forget it. And may it profit them unto salvation! For God has done this in His mercy if they will only consider the facts of the case.<sup>55</sup>

Picture to yourselves, then, brethren, the unity at that time of the Universal Church, from which these men separated themselves in opposition to Caecilian; picture also at this moment Donatus' sect, from which the Maximianists have separated in opposition to Primian. What the one party meted out in the past to Caecilian, the other has now meted out to Primian. Consequently the Maximianists claim that they are more honest than the Donatists, inasmuch as they have really and truly repeated the acts of their ancestors. For these men have set up Maximian against Primian in the same way as the others set up Majorinus against Caecilian, and they lodge the same complaint against Primian that the others lodged against Caecilian. For, if you remember, this was their charge—that Caecilian, knowing his own guilt, refused to appear before them; the truth was



that he was aware of their factiousness. In the same way, then, these men now complain because Primian has refused to appear before them. Why is Primian free to discern the prejudice of the Maximianist party, and Caecilian not free to discern that of the Donatists? Maximian was not as yet ordained, yet they were already bringing accusations against Primian: the bishops arrived and summoned him to appear before them. He did not do so, as the Tractatory inserted in their Records shows. He did not appear. I do not blame him, far from it; I praise him. Were you to discern a faction, you would be under no obligation to appear before its members; you should reserve your case for the fairer judgment of your own party. For there was still a large section of Donatus' party before whom Primian could have vindicated himself. He therefore refused to appear before men who had already banded themselves in opposition against him. Notice how we praise your precaution with the Maximianists.

Now scrutinize Caecilian's case as keenly. You will not weigh the case as a brother: do so as a stranger then. In refusing to appear, what did you say to yourself? These men are leagued in a plot against my life, they have been bribed to overthrow me; if I entrust myself to them, I am damaging my cause. I shall not plead before them; let my case be reserved for men who are fairer and better qualified to judge. A sound plan. What if Caecilian said this? You will find it a hard task, however, to produce some second Lucilla who has bribed them to do you harm; I doubt whether you will find one, whereas in his case the fact was so widely known that it was afterwards proved in the Proceedings.<sup>56</sup> But in yours, you were aware of some ambush, you had received warning of some danger. I grant that your fear

justified the precaution: you did right not to appear before such men, for there were others competent to judge your case. Now consider Caecilian's. You left yours to the judgment of Numidia, he left his to that of the whole world. But if you maintain that the past verdict of the Donatists against him is lawful, then the present verdict of the Maximianists against yourself must be lawful too. Bishops condemned him? Bishops condemned you also. Why did you afterwards plead your cause and prove it against the Maximianists? Did he not afterwards plead his in exactly the same way, and prove it against the Donatists? Past history, therefore, has come round again under our very eyes in a marvelous way for all to see: the Maximianists are lodging the selfsame complaints against Primian that the whole party made against Caecilian. I cannot tell you, brethren, what an impression it has made on me, and how I thank God, for truly God's mercy has furnished the object lesson to open their eyes, if they will but learn. And now, if you can spare a little time, brethren, listen to the Council of the Maximianists, seeing that God has put it into our hands. (And in the midst of his discourse, he proceeded to cite at the same time the Council of the Maximianists.)<sup>57</sup>

20. TO THE MOST HOLY BRETHREN AND THEIR COMPANY THROUGHOUT ALL AFRICA. (And as he was reading it, he added:) The sum total of their unity extends to Africa. But side by side with them here there is the Catholic Church, yet in other parts of the globe they are not side by side with the Catholic Church. (And thus commenting, he proceeded to read aloud the following:) TO THE MOST HOLY BRETHREN AND THEIR COMPANY ESTABLISHED THROUGHOUT ALL AFRICA, NAMELY, THROUGHOUT THE PROCONSULAR PROVINCE, NUMIDIA, MAURITANIA, BYZACENA AND

TRIPOLI; TO THE PRIESTS LIKEWISE AND DEACONS, TO ALL THE CONGREGATIONS, OUR FELLOW SOLDIERS IN THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, WE, VICTORINUS, FORTUNATUS, VICTORIAN, MIGGIN, SATURNINUS, CONSTANTIUS, CANDORIUS, INNOCENT, CRESCONIUS, FLORENTIUS, SALVIUS, A SECOND SALVIUS, DONATUS, GEMINIUS, PRAETEXTATUS. (And as he was reading it, he added:) This is the very Bishop of Assura whom after a time they readmitted; he later readmitted the judge who had delivered sentence against himself. (And thus commenting, he proceeded:) MAXIMIAN, THEODORE, ANASTASIUS, DONATIAN, DONATUS, A SECOND DONATUS, POMPONIUS, PANCRATIUS, JANUARIUS, SECUNDINUS, PASCASIUS, CRESCONIUS, ROGATIAN, A SECOND MAXIMIAN, BENENATUS, GAIANUS, VICTORINUS, GUNTASIUS, QUINTASIUS, FELICIAN, (And as he was reading it, he added:) Is this the Bishop of Mustita, still alive? Or possibly someone from another see? Afterwards the subscribers also name the see to which each belongs. (And thus commenting, he continued as follows:) SALVIUS, MIGGIN, PROCULUS, LATINUS, AND ALL PRESENT AT THE COUNCIL OF CABAROSSI,<sup>58</sup> EVERLASTING SALVATION IN THE LORD. EVERY ONE KNOWS, BELOVED BRETHREN, THAT IT IS NOT FROM SELF-WILL BUT ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTION OF THE DIVINE LAW THAT GOD'S PRIESTS EITHER PASS JUDGMENT ON THE GUILTY OR CANCEL THE PUNISHMENT INFLICTED UPON THE INNOCENT, IN CONFORMITY WITH JUSTICE AND MERIT. FOR THAT MAN INCURS NO SLIGHT DANGER WHO SPARES THE GUILTY OR ATTEMPTS TO SLAY THE INNOCENT, SEEING THAT IT IS EXPRESSLY WRITTEN: "THE INNOCENT AND THE JUST PERSON THOU SHALT NOT PUT TO DEATH, NOR SHALT THOU JUSTIFY THE WICKED."<sup>59</sup> BEING ADMONISHED, THEREFORE, BY THIS PRESCRIPTION OF THE LAW, WE WERE FORCED TO HEAR AND TO INVES-

TIGATE IN ITS LIGHT THE CASE OF PRIMIAN, WHOM THE HOLY PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH OF CARTHAGE HAD ELECTED AS BISHOP OF GOD'S SHEEPFOLD; THE ELDERS OF THAT CHURCH SENT US A PETITION TO DO SO, IN ORDER THAT WHEN THE WHOLE TRUTH WAS BROUGHT TO LIGHT WE MIGHT EITHER ACQUIT HIM AS INNOCENT, THE VERDICT WE HOPED TO PASS, OR, IF GUILTY, PROVE BEYOND ALL DOUBT THAT HIS PUNISHMENT WAS RICHLY DESERVED. FOR OUR INTENSE LONGING WAS THAT THE HOLY PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH OF CARTHAGE SHOULD REJOICE IN THE DISTINCTION OF POSSESSING A BISHOP REPUTED HOLY IN EVERY RESPECT, AND ABOVE CAVIL. SUCH, UNDOUBTEDLY, SHOULD A PRIEST OF THE LORD BE, SO THAT IN SO FAR AS THE FAITHFUL CANNOT WIN A HEARING FROM GOD FOR THEMSELVES, HE MAY BE WORTHY TO OBTAIN THE PETITIONS HE MAKES FOR THE FLOCK, SINCE IT IS WRITTEN: "IF THE PEOPLE SIN, THE PRIEST SHALL PRAY FOR THEM; BUT IF THE PRIEST SIN, WHO SHALL PRAY FOR HIM?"<sup>60</sup> (And as he was reading it, he added the comment:) Even the apostles wrote to the faithful to pray for them, even the apostles used to pray: *Forgive us our debts.*<sup>61</sup> The Apostle John has also declared: *We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just, and He is the propitiation for our sins.*<sup>62</sup> But this was written in reference to that Priest whom these men do not know, in order to warn the people in prophecy that the Priest they must look to was of such a nature that no human being had power to pray for Him. But who is there for whom no man prays except the One who Himself intercedes for all men? The priesthood in former days was the Levitical one, in which the priest used to enter the holy places and sacrifice victims for the people; he presented a mere shadow, not the substance, of another Priest to come, for the priests at that time were



sinners like the rest of men. For this reason God wished to impress upon the people by prophecy that even then they must await the Priest who might intercede for all, and for whom none could supplicate. He called their attention to such a one, reminding them in the words: *If the people sin, the priest shall pray for them; but if the priest sin, who shall pray for him?* Therefore, O people, choose as Priest one of such a nature that you have no need to pray for Him, but may rest assured of His prayer on your own behalf. He is our Lord Jesus Christ, the one Priest, *one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*<sup>63</sup> (And thus commenting, he proceeded to read aloud the following:) NOW THE OFFENSES OF PRIMIAN AND HIS OUTSTANDING WICKEDNESS HAVE SO FAR PROVOKED HEAVEN'S VENGEANCE AGAINST HIMSELF AS TO DEMAND THAT THE AUTHOR OF THESE CRIMES BE COMPLETELY CUT OFF. HE, BEING RECENTLY ORDAINED, (And as he read, he added the comment:) From this point onwards his misdeeds are set forth. (And thus commenting, he proceeded to read aloud:) URGED CERTAIN PRIESTS OF THE AFORESAID FAITHFUL TO COMBINE IN A HEINOUS CONSPIRACY; HE ASKED THEM TO DO HIM THIS FAVOR: THAT IN ORDER TO EFFECT THE CONDEMNATION OF FOUR DEACONS, MEN DISTINGUISHED AND ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE OF SIGNAL MERIT, TO WIT, MAXIMIAN, ROGATIAN, DONATUS AND LASTLY SALGAMIUS, (And as he was reading it, he remarked:) These four include that originator of the schism who chopped away a further fragment from the already existing one without any feeling of grief at being severed from the whole body. (And thus commenting, he again resumed:) THEY SHOULD PROMISE HIM WITHOUT DELAY TO AGREE TO COMMON ACTION. (And as he read, he added:) This was the plan he proposed to

them. They refused to give him the promise but kept silence; he unhesitatingly took it upon himself to carry the impious scheme into effect. (And after these remarks, he again proceeded:) AMAZED AT HIS WICKED PRESUMPTION, THEY REJECTED HIS PROPOSAL IN SILENCE, WHEREUPON HE DID NOT HESITATE TO CARRY HIS EVIL PLAN THROUGH UNASSISTED. HE WENT SO FAR AS TO THINK HE COULD PRONOUNCE SENTENCE UPON THE DEACON MAXIMIAN, AN INNOCENT MAN AS YOU ALL KNOW; THIS HE DID WITHOUT TRIAL, WITHOUT PROSECUTION, WITHOUT WITNESS, IN THE ABSENCE OF THE ACCUSED WHO WAS CONFINED TO A SICKBED. (And as he read, he added the comment:) Lo and behold, the crime! (And after commenting, he proceeded to read aloud:) HE HAD ALREADY LATELY CONDEMNED CERTAIN CLERICS IN A SOMEWHAT SIMILAR OUTBURST OF RAGE. WHEN, FOR INSTANCE, HE ADMITTED MEN OF UNCHASTE LIVES TO THE COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL, CONTRARY TO THE LAW AND DECRETALS OF ALL THE CLERGY, A LARGE PROPORTION OF THE LAITY RAISED OBJECTIONS, AND HE WAS FURTHERMORE SUMMONED BY LETTERS FROM THE MOST PROMINENT ELDERS TO REVOKE BY HIS OWN ACT WHAT HE HAD PERMITTED; HE THEREUPON GAVE FULL REIN TO HIS HEADSTRONG NATURE AND SCORNE TO MAKE AMENDS. PERTURBED BY HIS ACTS, THE ELDERS OF THE AFORESAID CHURCH DESPATCHED LETTERS AND DEPUTIES THEREFORE TO THE WHOLE EPISCOPATE<sup>64</sup> IMPLORING US THEREIN, NOT WITHOUT TEARS, TO COME TO THEM WITH ALL SPEED, SO THAT HAVING CAREFULLY CONSIDERED BOTH SIDES AND INVESTIGATED THE CHARGES, WE MIGHT VINDICATE THE CHURCH'S HONOR. WE ACCORDINGLY ARRIVED HERE IN ANSWER TO THE LETTERS OF THE PETITIONERS, WHEREAT HE WAS ENRAGED AFTER HIS USUAL FASHION AND UTTERLY REFUSED

TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR ARRIVAL. (And as he was reading, he added:) You realize the charge against him: that Donatus' party has now become defiled. This was a principle of theirs: The character of those admitted to communion becomes the character of the entire body, individually and collectively. If therefore they are speaking the truth, the whole party of Donatus is at present defiled. Let the Numidians come forth and plainly declare: It matters not to us if you have admitted shameless men to your communion, whoever they are. Could it harm us at such a great distance? If therefore you do not allow that what happens at Carthage can affect you who live in Numidia, could what happens in Africa be prejudicial to the Universal Church? The grounds of their defense invariably serve to accuse themselves and justify us. (Having thus commented, he resumed:) HE UTTERLY REFUSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR ARRIVAL. (And as he was reading, he added:) Precisely what they complained of in Caecilian. (After his comment, he continued to read aloud:) HE, BEING UNRULY AND THOROUGHLY DEFIANT IN EVERY WAY, SO FAR PERSISTED IN HIS EVIL COURSE AS TO HIRE A MOB OF DESPERATE RUFFIANS, (As he read, he added:) Here is something fresh. They never charged Caecilian with this. Notice the rest. (And thus commenting, he resumed the reading:) AND HAVING PROCURED OFFICERS, THEY BLOCKADED THE DOORS OF THE BASILICAS, (Whilst reading, he added:) To prevent the bishops' entering. (After his comment he continued to read aloud:) IN ORDER TO DEPRIVE US OF ENTRY TO PERFORM THE SOLEMNITIES. WHETHER A BISHOP MAY LAWFULLY ACT THUS, WHETHER CHRISTIANS MAY PERMIT IT, WHETHER THE GOSPELS RATIFY IT, LET ANY LOVER AND CHAMPION OF TRUTH EXAMINE AND DECIDE. THIS

IN FACT WAS THE ILL-TREATMENT INFLICTED UPON US BY ONE BUT LATELY OUR OWN BROTHER; NO STRANGER WOULD EVER HAVE DONE IT. (And as he was reading, he added:) Why proceed further? They have a great deal to say and they condemn the man; but now let us read the condemnation. (With this comment, he resumed:) ALL WE, PRIESTS OF GOD, GUIDED BY THE HOLY GHOST, HAVE DECREED THAT WHEREAS FIRST OF ALL THIS SAME PRIMIAN HAS APPOINTED OTHERS IN THE PLACE OF BISHOPS YET LIVING; WHEREAS HE HAS GIVEN MEN OF IMPURE LIVES ACCESS TO THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS; WHEREAS HE HAS ATTEMPTED TO FORCE PRIESTS TO JOIN IN A CONSPIRACY; WHEREAS HE HAS CAUSED THE PRIEST FORTUNATUS TO BE THROWN INTO A SEWER FOR HAVING ADMINISTERED BAPTISM TO THE SICK; WHEREAS HE HAS REFUSED COMMUNION TO DEMETRIUS A PRIEST IN ORDER TO COMPEL HIM TO DISOWN HIS SON; WHEREAS THE SAID PRIEST HAS BEEN CENSURED FOR HAVING SHOWN HOSPITALITY TO THE BISHOPS; WHEREAS THE AFORESAID PRIMIAN DESPATCHED A MOB TO PULL DOWN THE HOUSES OF CHRISTIANS; WHEREAS THE BISHOPS TOGETHER WITH THE CLERGY WERE HEMMED IN AND LATER STONED BY HIS HIRELINGS; WHEREAS THE ELDERS WERE BEATEN IN THE BASILICA FOR HAVING SHOWN INDIGNATION AT THE ADMISSION OF THE CLAUDIANISTS<sup>65</sup> TO COMMUNION; WHEREAS HE DEEMED FIT TO CONDEMN INNOCENT CLERICS; WHEREAS HE REFUSED TO APPEAR BEFORE US WHEN, BY MEANS OF THE MOB AND THE OFFICIALS, HE BARRED THE DOORS OF THE BASILICAS AGAINST OUR ENTRY; WHEREAS HE CONTEMPTUOUSLY DISMISSED THE DEPUTIES WE SENT TO HIM; WHEREAS HE HAS APPROPRIATED MANY RESIDENCES, AT FIRST BY FORCE, AND AFTERWARDS BY APPEAL TO THE CIVIL TRIBUNAL—(As he read, he added:) This is the man who



never claims what has been taken away, although the Apostle Paul says: *Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to be judged before the unjust, and not before the saints?*<sup>66</sup> Notice the nature of the accusation made against him: that he determined to refer his action over the residences, not to the bishops but to the civil judge. (And after these remarks, he proceeded to read aloud:) TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER UNLAWFUL ACTS HE HAS COMMITTED, WHICH, NOT TO TARNISH OUR PEN, WE PASS OVER IN SILENCE—HE IS TO BE CUT OFF FOREVER FROM THE SACERDOTAL BODY, FOR FEAR THAT BY CONTACT WITH HIM THE CHURCH OF GOD SHOULD BE CONTAMINATED EITHER BY INFECTION OR BY ANY REPROACH. THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT ST. PAUL COUNSELS AND ORDAINS: “AND WE CHARGE YOU, BRETHREN, IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THAT YOU WITHDRAW YOURSELVES FROM EVERY BROTHER WALKING DISORDERLY.”<sup>67</sup> WHEREFORE, NOT UNMINDFUL OF THE CHURCH’S PURITY, WE HAVE JUDGED IT EXPEDIENT BY THIS OUR TRACTATORY TO WARN ALL OUR HOLY COLLEAGUES IN THE EPISCOPATE, ALL CLERICS, AND ALL THE FAITHFUL CONSCIOUS OF THEIR CHRISTIAN STATE, ONE AND ALL WITH THE UTMOST CARE TO SHUN HIS COMPANY AS BEING EXCOMMUNICATE. FOR WHOEVER ATTEMPTS TO VIOLATE THIS OUR DECREE BY IGNORING THE SAME SHALL BE ANSWERABLE FOR HIS OWN DAMNATION. IT HATH SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY GHOST AND TO US, HOWEVER, THAT A PERIOD OF TIME BE GRANTED TO THOSE SLOW TO CONFORM. WHEREFORE ANY AMONG OUR FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE EPISCOPATE OR CLERGY WHO, SETTING AT NAUGHT THEIR OWN SALVATION, CEASE NOT FROM COMMUNION WITH THE CONDEMNED PRIMIAN WITHIN THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE DATE OF THE CONDEMNATION OF THE AFORE-

SAID, NAMELY, THE TWENTY-SECOND OF JUNE, AND THE TWENTY-SECOND OF DECEMBER, SHALL FALL UNDER A LIKE BAN. UNLESS THE LAITY ALSO BREAK OFF ALL INTERCOURSE WITH HIM WITHIN THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE ABOVE-NAMED DAY OF HIS CONDEMNATION AND THE EASTER DAY FOLLOWING, NO MAN, BE IT KNOWN, CAN BE RESTORED TO THE CHURCH EXCEPT HE DO PENANCE. SIGNED, VICTORINUS, BISHOP OF MUNATIA. SIGNED, FORTUNATUS, BISHOP OF DIONYSIANUM. SIGNED, VICTORIAN, BISHOP OF CARCABIA. SIGNED, FLORENTIUS, BISHOP OF ADRUMETUM. SIGNED, MIGGIN, BISHOP OF ELEPHANTARIA. SIGNED, INNOCENT, BISHOP OF THEBALTA. I, MIGGIN, SIGNED FOR MY COLLEAGUE SALVIUS<sup>68</sup> OF MEMBRESA. SIGNED, SALVIUS, BISHOP OF AUSAFA. SIGNED, DONATUS, BISHOP OF SABRATA. SIGNED, GEMELIUS, BISHOP OF TANABOEAE. (And as he was reading, he added:) And now among the very men who condemned him, we have the signatures both of Praetextatus of Assura and of Felician of Mustita.<sup>69</sup> (And thus commenting, he proceeded to read aloud:) SIGNED, PRAETEXTATUS, BISHOP OF ASSURA. SIGNED, MAXIMIAN, BISHOP OF STABATA. SIGNED, DATIAN, BISHOP OF CAMICETA. SIGNED, DONATUS, BISHOP OF FISCIANA. SIGNED, THEODORE, BISHOP OF USULA. I, VICTORIAN, HAVE SIGNED AT THE REQUEST OF MY COLLEAGUE BISHOP AGNOSIUS. SIGNED, DONATUS, BISHOP OF CEBRESUTA. SIGNED, NATALICUS, BISHOP OF THELA. SIGNED, POMPONIUS, BISHOP OF MACRIANA. SIGNED, PANCRATIUS, BISHOP OF BALIANA. SIGNED, JANUARIUS, BISHOP OF AQUENUM. SIGNED, SECUNDUS, BISHOP OF JACONDIANA. SIGNED, PASCASIUS, BISHOP OF VICUS AUGUSTI. SIGNED, CRESO, BISHOP OF CONJUSTIACUM. SIGNED, ROGATIAN, BISHOP. SIGNED, MAXIMIAN, BISHOP OF ERUMMINUM. SIGNED, BENENATUS, BISHOP OF TUGUTIANUM.

SIGNED, RITANUS, BISHOP. SIGNED, GAIANUS, BISHOP OF TIGUALA. SIGNED, VICTORINUS, BISHOP OF LEPTIMAGNA. SIGNED, GUNTASIUS, BISHOP OF BENEFA. SIGNED, QUINTASIUS, BISHOP OF CAPSA. SIGNED, FELICIAN, BISHOP OF MUSTITA. SIGNED, VICTORIAN, AS DEPUTED BY MIGGIN, BISHOP. SIGNED, MIGGIUS, BISHOP. SIGNED, LATINUS, BISHOP OF MUGIAE. SIGNED, PROCULUS, BISHOP OF GIRBITA. I, DONATUS, BISHOP OF SABRA, SIGNED FOR MY BROTHER AND COLLEAGUE MARRATIUS. I, PROCULUS OF GIRBITA, SIGNED FOR MY COLLEAGUE GALLIONUS. SIGNED, SECUNDIAN, BISHOP OF PRISIANUM. SIGNED HELPIDIUS, BISHOP OF TUSDITA. SIGNED, DONATUS, BISHOP OF SAMURDATA. SIGNED, GETULICUS, BISHOP OF VICTORIANA. SIGNED ANNIBONIUS, BISHOP OF ROBATA. I, ANNIBONIUS, ALSO SIGNED, AS REQUESTED BY MY COLLEAGUE THE BISHOP OF AUGENDIARA. SIGNED, TERTULLUS, BISHOP OF ABITA. SIGNED, PRIMULIAN, BISHOP. SIGNED, SECUNDINUS, BISHOP OF ARUSIA. SIGNED, MAXIMUS, BISHOP OF PITANA. SIGNED, CRESCENTIAN, BISHOP OF MURRA. SIGNED, DONATUS, BISHOP OF BELMA. SIGNED, PERSEVERANTIUS, BISHOP OF TEBERTA. SIGNED, FAUSTINUS, BISHOP OF BINA. SIGNED, VICTOR, BISHOP OF ALTIBURA. IN ALL, FIFTY-THREE IN NUMBER.

21. (And as he was reading aloud, he also added by way of comment:) Have the goodness to give this matter your attention for a moment. Here is your condemnation. We say to him: Well? Is this to carry weight or not? I think you are in the right; in fact, I say that all these men have borne false witness against you. And I will tell you my reason for believing so. You won your case before other judges, and these men were condemned. If, therefore, I believe you are innocent because you refused to be tried by the members of the faction and

proved your innocence elsewhere so completely that they who condemned you clearly merited condemnation themselves, then be so good as to recognize the innocence of Caecilian, who refused to be tried by your predecessors, and reserved his case for the cognizance of the Church Universal, precisely as you reserved yours for the Council of Numidia. If the See of Bagai<sup>70</sup> vindicated your innocence, how much more effectively did not the Apostolic See vindicate his? Or would you rather that the sentence of those who first condemned you should stand? If so, it will tell against yourself. Against Caecilian their judgment neither was, nor will be, valid; but take care not to pass sentence against yourself.

22. At this point they have the effrontery to say: "But we who afterwards condemned the Maximianists were a greater number." Let your sentence, then, be valid against Felician, and theirs against Caecilian will be valid also. When they set up a council at Bagai, Felician was one of those condemned. At present Felician is in their midst: either he was reinstated though guilty, or he was condemned though innocent. If, then, you reinstate a guilty man for the peace of the Donatist party, you should yield to the rest of the world for the sake of the peace of Christendom. If, on the other hand, an innocent man was condemned through your error, was it possible for three hundred and ten to be mistaken in condemning Felician, and not for seventy to be mistaken in condemning Caecilian? What, then, is your answer? When you are told: "The Maximianists previously condemned you," you resort to saying: "But we who condemned the Maximianists were a greater number." To both your positions<sup>71</sup> a reply can be promptly given, because those predecessors of yours condemned



Caecilian. If priority gives validity, let the Primianists bow to the Council of the Maximianists; if numbers give validity, let the Donatists bow to the Church Universal. Nothing, I think, could be fairer. The Maximianists are few in number; but their sentence was passed first. A convicted party cannot convict. If you agree upon that, how could you, condemned as you are, venture to pass sentence? For his own name stands in the list of those who uttered the condemnation, and they did not leave him in the position of defendant. It was otherwise, however, with Caecilian; he was given the position of defendant, as the sentence itself proves; he was not received back to communion except on his acquittal. This man, however, is found in one place condemned by his judges, in another passing sentence of condemnation among the judges. But this may have been the fairness of the Council of Bagai; we readily grant all that. The Maximianists did wrong in condemning you; and those predecessors of yours did wrong in condemning Caecilian. You cleared yourself at Bagai; he cleared himself in the tribunal beyond the seas. The Church Universal accepted the decision of that tribunal. What are you about to say? We are more numerous than the Maximianists. Yes, you are more numerous. Well, let us consider this question of numbers;<sup>72</sup> see what the difference is. The Maximianists condemned you in your absence, since you refused to appear before them. Thus far there is a likeness, for in the same way the others condemned Caecilian, who had shunned their faction; you on the other hand had sentence passed against them in their absence, at the Council of Bagai, yet Caecilian was acquitted being actually present, in the face of his adversary.

Then there is another great difference: those judges of

Numidia, before whom you were to prove your innocence, were appealed to and appointed by yourself, the Maximianists did not ask for them. But Donatus was defeated by Caecilian before those very men whom his own party had demanded to judge the case. Hereupon the Maximianists will reply to you, very properly: "We, bishops of your province, of the diocese belonging to you, first approached you and would have judged your case; you despised us and would not appear before us. If you were afraid of our verdict, we should at least have named judges in conjunction; you should not have gone to those of your own choice." Notice the vast difference. You have the Donatists themselves appealing by letter to the emperor to appoint judges. They found fault with those before whom they were condemned, for whom previous to their defeat they had petitioned. At their request others were appointed: this time also they were condemned; they appealed to the emperor, and before him were again condemned. The Maximianist, beaten once when absent, keeps silence; the Donatist, thrice condemned on the spot, does not.

23. However, you are disputing with the Maximianists about the numbers involved. As I have said, I think you are in the right. Three hundred and ten are more than one hundred, or whatever they were on Maximian's side who condemned Primian. On Caecilian's side, thousands of bishops of the Church Universal condemned Donatus, and do they carry no weight with you? But you will answer me: Did thousands of bishops from the whole Universal Church actually condemn Donatus? Well and good, they did not actually condemn him. Why not? Because they were not present at the trial. If they were not present at the trial, that was precisely why they did

not condemn him—they were in complete ignorance of the case.

Why have you cut yourself off from those who have done no harm? Some person who has been baptized comes here from the Church Universal, and you want to rebaptize him.<sup>73</sup> Thereupon he encounters you, exercising your poisonous ministry and wishing to repeat what is given once only and cannot be effaced, and cries out to you with shouts and sobs: “What is it you want to do—rebaptize me?” So speaks a man from Mesopotamia, so one from Syria or another from Pontus or from some yet more distant region. You reply: “It is because you have no baptism.” What! Read the Apostle’s letters addressed to me. Someone comes from Galatia or Pontus, someone comes from Philadelphia—churches to which John wrote<sup>74</sup>—someone comes from Colossae, Philippi, Thessalonica and says: “If I, to whom the Apostle wrote, have no baptism, through whom do you possess it? How dare you read my Epistle, you who detest my communion?”

### THIRD DISCOURSE ON PSALM 36

1. The concluding portion of this Psalm was left over without our explaining and discussing it together. Clearly, then, if not in accordance with our plans, it is at any rate not contrary to His that the Lord has recalled us to complete the unfinished work. Pay attention then, brethren, so that now at least, if possible, we may by God’s help repay what we are conscious of owing. Who is the speaker of the words we have just chanted? [V. 25] *I have been young, and lo, I am old, and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread.* If, let us

suppose, one man is speaking, just how long is one man's lifetime? And what great matter is it if throughout his whole life—brief as human life is even though prolonged from youth to old age—a man residing in some corner or other of the earth has possibly never seen the just forsaken nor his seed seeking bread? There is nothing wonderful about that. It might have happened that before his time there had been some just man seeking bread; it might have occurred in another part of the world and not where he was living. Very well; now notice another striking thing. I daresay, indeed, that when any man here who has reached old age looks back over the years of his past life, and dwells in thought upon the men he has personally known, it is conceivable that he may not recall any just man seeking bread, or any just man's son doing so. Nevertheless, when he looks at the divine Scriptures, he finds that the just Abraham migrated to another country when in distress and suffering from famine in his own;<sup>1</sup> he finds this man's son Isaac for the same reason, for famine, betaking himself to other lands in search of bread.<sup>2</sup> And how can *I have never seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread* be true? Even if a man finds it true in regard to his own lifetime, yet he finds it otherwise in the inspired writings, which are more trustworthy than the life of men.

2. What is our task, then? You must help us by your earnest application to detect in these lines of the Psalm God's purpose, and what He intends us to gather from them. For there is cause to fear that some ill-balanced soul, incapable of understanding the Scriptures in a spiritual way, may seize upon human examples, observing that at times good servants of God suffer some degree of want and have to seek for bread; in particular he may



reflect upon the Apostle Paul's words, *In hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness*,<sup>3</sup> and he may be inwardly scandalized, and ask: "Is what I have chanted really true? Is it really true, as I have stood in church singing forth in such pious tones, that *I have never seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread*? The Scriptures play us false," he may say, while every part of him is losing grip on its well-doing; and what is more serious, when his spiritual powers, when the man's soul grows benumbed as well, he may in the future cast off good works altogether and say to himself: "Why should I do good works? Why deal my bread to the hungry, clothe the naked, and bring the homeless into my own house,<sup>4</sup> with the text *I have never seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread* in my mind, whereas in fact I see all these men leading good lives and often enough suffering from hunger? On the other hand, if I happen to be mistaken in thinking that the man who leads a good life and the man who does not are both actually living good lives, and God knows the truth, that in fact he whom I consider good is really wicked—what am I to make of Abraham, whom the Scripture itself praises as just? What am I to make of the Apostle Paul himself, who tells us: *Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ*?<sup>5</sup> Or am I also likely to suffer the same evils as he did, *in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness*?"

3. When a man thinks such thoughts as these, and, as I have said, all his inner powers have lost their grip on good works, cannot we take him up, brethren, like the paralytic, and remove the covering from this passage of Scripture and lay him down before our Lord? For it is not clear, as you see, and not being clear it is obviously roofed over. I am gazing upon a man who is spiritually

paralyzed. I see this outer covering, and beneath this covering I feel sure that Christ is hidden. So far as I can, I shall do what they were praised for doing who uncovered the roof and let the paralytic down before Christ, so that He might tell the man: *Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Thus did He heal the man's soul of its palsy, by forgiving his sins and bracing up his faith. But there were men present who had no eyes to see the man who had been inwardly palsied restored to health, and they considered the Physician who healed him a blasphemer. *Who is this, said they, that forgiveth sins? This man blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins, but God alone?*<sup>6</sup> And being God, He heard them thinking such thoughts. What they thought about God was right enough; but they did not see God before their very eyes. Therefore the Physician did something to the paralytic's body as well, in order to heal the interior palsy of those who spoke thus. He did something for them to see and gave them something to believe. Come then, any of you who are so weak and sickly of heart as to attach importance to human examples, and wish to give up good works, you who are all unnerved with a kind of inner palsy, come, let us proceed to remove this roof if we can, and lay ourselves down at our Lord's feet.

4. Now our Lord Himself, considered in His Body which is the Church, was young in the early ages and, as you see, has now grown old. You know and realize and appreciate that you have been given a place therein, and it is a matter of faith with you that Christ is our Head; we are the Body belonging to this Head.<sup>7</sup> Does this include merely ourselves, and not also those who have gone before us? All who have been upright of life from the beginning of the world have Christ as their

Head. They indeed believed in the future coming of Him whom we now believe to have come. They too were healed by this same faith, even as we likewise are, so that He might be Head of the whole city of Jerusalem, comprising all the faithful from beginning to end and adding moreover the legions and hosts of angels. Thus there should be one city under one king, one province, so to speak, under one ruler, happy in perpetual peace and security, ceaselessly praising God and ceaselessly happy. But Christ's Body, which is the Church,<sup>8</sup> like any human person, was first young and, as you see, now at the end of the world has reached a fruitful old age; for the words *She shall still increase in a fruitful old age*<sup>9</sup> are spoken of her. She has been multiplied throughout all nations, and her speech is like that of a single man considering the prime of his youth and his present advanced years: she has scrutinized all, for by means of the Scriptures she has made acquaintance with all ages; and she declares, in exultation and warning: *I have been young, in the early ages of the world, and now am old, for in truth I have reached the last ages of the world: and I have never seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread.*

5. We have solved the problem of the man who was young and now is old, and removing the roof, so to speak, have made our way to Christ. But who is the just man who has not been seen forsaken, nor his seed begging bread? If you grasp the meaning of bread, you will understand who he is. Now bread is the word of God, which never fails the just man's lips. That was the answer returned by the just man, tempted in his Head. When our Lord Himself was hungry and suffering want of food, and the devil said to Him: *Command that these stones*

*be made bread*, He replied: *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word of God.*<sup>10</sup> Finally, my brethren, consider if the just man ever neglects to do God's will. In fact, he invariably does it, since he conforms his whole life to God's will. The will of God is never absent from his heart: for God's will is identical with God's law. And what is said of such a man? *And on His law he shall meditate day and night.*<sup>11</sup> The other kind of bread you eat for a while, then you have had enough; but the bread of the word you feed upon day and night. When you listen to it, or when you read it, you are eating it; when you reflect on it afterwards, you are ruminating, to prove yourself a clean animal, not an unclean one.<sup>12</sup> This is also taught us by wisdom, declaring through Solomon: *A desirable treasure resteth in the mouth of the wise; but the foolish man swalloweth it.*<sup>13</sup> He who swallows whole, so that no trace is left of what he has gobbled up, has forgotten what he heard. He, however, who has not forgotten, reflects on it; by reflecting he ruminates, and by ruminating he savors its delight. Hence the saying: *A holy thought shall preserve thee.*<sup>14</sup> So, you see, if by ruminating on this bread, a holy thought protects you, then you *have never seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread.*

6. [V. 26] *He showeth mercy and lendeth all the day long.* *Feneratur* in Latin, it is true, applies both to him who lends and to him who borrows: the meaning will be clearer if we say *fenerat*.<sup>15</sup> What do the rules of the schoolmasters matter to us?<sup>16</sup> Better you should understand our barbarism than be left high and dry with our pedantic exactitude.<sup>17</sup> Well then, this just man *shows mercy and lends all the day long.* But moneylenders need



not rejoice. For there are moneylenders and moneylenders, just as there is bread and bread: and in either instance, once we have removed the outer covering we shall reach Christ. I will not have you be moneylenders, and for this reason, that God would not have you so. For if God allows what merely I forbid, do it by all means; but if it is against God's will, even though I were to allow it, he who did it would do so to his own hurt. Why is it clear that God does not permit it? We learn in another passage: *He that hath not put out his money to usury.*<sup>18</sup> And how detestable, how odious, how execrable a thing it is, I think even usurers themselves know well enough. Yet, on the other hand, I myself, or rather our God, who forbids you to be a usurer, at the same time commands you to be one; and you are told: Lend to God. If you lend to a human being, you look for something further; and if you lend to God, do you look for nothing? If you have lent your money, that is to say, advanced a loan to some man from whom you expect to receive interest, and not only in money, but in whatever you gave, whether wheat or wine or oil or anything else; if, as I said, you expect to receive back more than you gave, you are a usurer, and in this respect you deserve blame and not praise.

"What am I to do, then," you ask, "so as to be a usurer for my real advantage?" Notice what a usurer does. Undoubtedly, he intends to advance less and recover more. You must do the same thing; give a little, receive much in return. See how profitably your principal will mount up. Dispose of temporal things, get back eternal ones: give earth, receive heaven. "And to whom shall I give?" perhaps you ask. The Lord Himself, who commanded you not to practice usury, comes forward to receive your loan. Listen

to the Scripture telling you how to lend to the Lord: *He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord.*<sup>19</sup> Not that the Lord needs anything of yours. But you know some one who does: it is to Him you offer it, He takes it. The poor man has nothing to repay you; and yet he wants to do so, but cannot find the wherewithal: he has nothing but the good will to pray for you. Now when a poor man prays for you, it is as though he says to God: "Lord, I have contracted a loan, stand surety for me." Then, although you have no guarantee of the poor man's repayment, yet you hold a sufficient surety. God tells you, does He not, through His Scripture: Give with easy mind, I will repay. How do those who make themselves responsible for others usually speak? What do they say? "I am repaying, I am receiving, it is to me you are giving." May we not suppose that God also says: "I am receiving, you are giving to me"? If Christ is God, which is beyond all question, clearly God Himself has said: *I was hungry, and you gave me to eat.* And when they asked: *When did we see thee hungry?*, in order to teach us that He stands surety for the poor, that He answers for all His members, because He is the Head, they the members, and when the members receive anything the Head also receives it, He replied: *As long as you did it to one of these least of mine, you did it to me.*

There now, you grasping usurer, look what you have advanced, look what you are to recover! If you had advanced a paltry sum of money, and he to whom you had lent it were to give you, in return for that paltry sum, a large estate, worth incomparably more than the money you had given him, how grateful you would be, how transported with joy! Now let me tell you what you will receive in possession from Him to whom you

have advanced your loan. *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you—what? Just what you have given? Heaven forbid! You have given earthly things, which would have moldered away on earth had you not given them. And what would you have done with them then, if you had not given them away? That which would have perished on earth has been preserved in heaven. The deposit preserved in safe custody, then, is what we are to receive. Merit has been preserved: your merit has become your treasure. Why, see what you are to receive: Possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* What, on the contrary, will be said to those who refused to lend? *Depart into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.* And what is the name of the kingdom we receive? Notice what follows: *These shall go into everlasting burning, but the just into life everlasting.*<sup>20</sup> Let this be your aim, this the object of your buying and lending. You have Christ enthroned in heaven and begging an alms on earth. We have discovered how the God-fearing man is to lend. *He showeth mercy and lendeth all the day long.*

7. *And his seed shall be in blessing.* Here, too, you must conjure up no crude visions. We see many a good man's son dying of hunger: how then is it true that *his seed shall be in blessing*? His seed is what he leaves behind, that from which he sows here and will reap hereafter. So is it that the Apostle says: *And in doing good, let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing. Therefore, whilst we have time, says he, let us work good to all men.*<sup>21</sup> This is your seed which is to be in blessing. You commit it to the earth, and you harvest a great increase; you commit it to Christ, and do you lose it? Notice how the Apostle quite expressly refers to this seed

when speaking of almsgiving. His words are these: *He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap blessings.*<sup>22</sup> Perhaps, however, the sowing is a labor to you, and in your compassion you feel grief-stricken at the sight of people in misery. One day, in a better world, there will be none to need such gifts from us. When all men have put on incorruption, there will be no hungry for you to supply with bread, no thirsty to refresh with drink, no naked to clothe, no wayfarer to shelter; but here, amid troubles and trials, sorrows and sighs, we are sowing the seed. However, recall the words of another Psalm: *Going they went and wept, casting their seeds.*<sup>23</sup> And notice that *his seed shall be in blessing; but coming they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves.*

8. Now see what follows, and do not be slow to act. [V. 27] *Decline from evil and do good.* Do not think you are doing enough if you are not stripping a man of his clothes. True, in not stripping a man you have declined from evil; but you must not stop there and remain unfruitful. Far from stripping off a man's clothes, you must cover the naked; this is what it means to decline from evil and do good. "And what shall I get for it?" you are about to ask. He to whom you are advancing a loan has already informed you what He intends to give you. He will give you life everlasting. Make your offering to Him with an easy mind. Listen, moreover, to the conclusion. *Decline from evil and do good, and dwell forever and ever.* And do not think when you give that nobody sees you. And when you happen to have given an alms, and some harm or some trouble arising from the donation ensues, do not imagine that God has forsaken you, and say to yourself: "What have I gained by doing



good works? Apparently God has no regard for men who do good works." Why this hubbub among you, why this uproar,<sup>24</sup> if not because many of you make such remarks? Everyone at this very moment recognizes that such expressions are on his own lips or those of his neighbor or his friend. May God put a stop to them, and root up the thorns from His field; may He plant a good crop and a fruitful tree. Why are you vexed, man, because you have given one thing to a poor man and have lost another? Can you not see that you have lost what you did *not* give away? Why not turn your eyes towards your God? Where is your faith? Why is it thus asleep? Rouse it up in your heart. Pay attention to what our Lord Himself told you when urging you to perform good works of this kind: *Make to yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in heaven which faileth not, where no thief approacheth.*<sup>25</sup> Remember this, then, when you are bewailing some loss. What are you complaining about, you narrow-minded simpleton if no worse? Why did you lose the thing if not because you did not lend it to me? Why did you lose it? Who robbed you of it? "A thief," you reply. Had I not forewarned you precisely not to store up goods where a thief could get at them? So if a man grieves over losing something, let him rather grieve because he has not stored the thing in a place from which it could not disappear.

9. [V. 28] *For the Lord loveth judgment and will not forsake His saints.* When the saints suffer hardships, do not suppose that God either does not judge at all or judges amiss. Will He who bids you judge justly Himself judge wrongly? *He loves judgment and will not forsake His saints.* The manner in which He does so is such that the life of the saints is hidden in Him;

whereas now, toiling on earth, they resemble trees seen in winter, destitute of fruits and leaves, hereafter, when He appears like the newly risen sun, the vitality which persisted in the root will become visible in their fruits.<sup>26</sup> He *loves judgment*, then, *and will not forsake His saints*. "But such and such a saint is afflicted with hunger," you say? The Lord will not forsake him: *He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth*.<sup>27</sup> You despise him when he is being chastised, you are terrified when he is clad in honor. What occasions his chastisement? The afflictions of the present time. When will he be clad in honor? When he hears the words: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*. So do not be reluctant to undergo the correction, and then you will rank among those who deserve to be received to favor. In His love of judgment the Lord never reaches the point of forsaking His saints whom He chastises for the time being. And since He chastises every son whom He receives, He did not spare even His Only-Begotten, in whom He found no transgression. *For the Lord loveth judgment and will not forsake His saints*. Since He will not forsake them, perhaps He will grant them the thing you long after in this world, many years of life and the attainment of old age? You forget that if you wish for a prolonged old age, you are wishing for something which will be a cause of complaint when it does come. Hence shut your ears to any wicked or frail or fainthearted soul who would say to you: "How can it be true that the Lord loves judgment and will not forsake His saints?" Obviously He did not forsake the three children who gave praise in the furnace: the fire did not touch them.<sup>28</sup> Were not the Machabees His saints too, who lost their bodies in the fire but

not their faith?<sup>29</sup> "But this," you say, "raises a more serious problem, because although they did not fail in faith, He forsook them." Listen to what follows: *They shall be preserved forever*. You were wishing them a few more years of life, on the presumption that if God had granted this, He would not have forsaken His saints. Openly He did not forsake the three children, in secret He did not forsake the Machabees; the former He granted temporal life to confound the unbelievers, the latter He crowned in secret, to condemn the impiety of the persecutor. Neither the one group nor the other did He forsake who *will not forsake His saints*. And it was nothing great the three children received, had not their expectation been life everlasting. *They shall be preserved forever*.

10. But *the unjust shall be punished, and the seed of the wicked shall perish*. Just as the good man's seed shall be in blessing, so likewise *the seed of the wicked shall perish*: the seed of the wicked denotes the works of the wicked. For to take an example, at one time we find a wicked man's son prospering in the world, and at another we find him becoming upright and prospering in Christ. Be careful to interpret it, then, so as to strip off the covering and reach Christ: do not interpret it in a mundane sense or you will be misled. But the seed of the wicked, that is to say, all the works of the wicked, shall perish; they shall bear no fruit. For a time, it is true, they have a certain value; but when search is made hereafter, nothing will be found of all their toil. For this will be the lament of those who have forfeited the result of their labors: *What hath pride profited us, or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow*.<sup>30</sup> As I said: *The seed of the wicked shall perish*.

11. [V. 29] *The just shall inherit the land.* You must not let avarice again creep in and promise you some spacious estate, or you will be hoping for something in the next world which you are bidden to despise in this one. The land here spoken of is that land of the living, the kingdom of the saints. For this reason it is said: *Thou art my hope, my portion in the land of the living.*<sup>31</sup> If that is to be your life, try to understand what kind of a land you are to receive. That is the land of the living; but this is the land of those who are to die, the land which receives back after death those whom it nourished in life. Such as that life is, such is that land; if the life is everlasting, the land too will be everlasting. And how can a land be everlasting? *And they shall dwell there forevermore.* There will be another land, then, where we shall dwell forevermore. For of this one we are told: *Heaven and earth shall pass.*<sup>32</sup>

12. [V. 30] *The mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom.* Now we reach the real bread: see how this just man relishes it, how he rolls wisdom on his tongue. *And his tongue shall speak judgment.* [V. 31] *The law of his God is in his heart.* Otherwise you might suppose that he has something in his mouth which is not in his heart, and you might reckon him among those of whom it is said: *This people with their lips glorify me, but their heart is far from me.*<sup>33</sup> *And his tongue shall speak judgment. The law of his God is in his heart.* And what does he gain by it? *And his steps shall not be supplanted.* God's word in the heart delivers from the snare, God's word in the heart delivers from the crooked way, God's word in the heart delivers from the slippery place. He is with you, provided that His word does not depart from you.

What evil does he suffer whom God keeps safe? You



set a watchman in your vineyard and are safe from thieves; but that watchman may go to sleep, he may himself fail you and admit a thief; but He that keepeth Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers. *The law of his God is in his heart, and his steps shall not be supplanted.*<sup>34</sup> Let him live free from care, then; let him live free from care among the wicked and among the ungodly. What evil can an ungodly or unjust man do to an upright one? Notice what follows: [V. 32] *The wicked watcheth the just man and seeketh to put him to death.* For he says what the Book of Wisdom has foretold that he will say: *He is grievous to us even to behold, for his life is not like other men's.*<sup>35</sup> Therefore he seeks to put him to death. Well? Does the Lord, who keeps this man, dwells with him, departs not from his mouth or his heart—does He forsake him? What becomes of the words previously uttered, *And He will not forsake His saints?*

13. Let us continue. *The wicked watcheth the just one and seeketh to put him to death.* [V. 33] *But the Lord will not leave him in his hands.* Then why did He leave the martyrs in the hands of the ungodly? Why did they do whatever they pleased with them? Some they put to death with the sword, some crucified, some flung to the beasts, some they burnt to ashes, some they led in chains and wore out with a protracted wasting. But beyond all question the Lord will not forsake His saints: *the Lord will not leave him in his hands.* A final query: Why did He leave His own Son Himself in the hands of the Jews? To answer this as well, if you wish all your inward powers made whole, you must strip off the outer covering and penetrate to our Lord. Listen to another passage of Scripture. Foreseeing that our Lord would suffer at the hands of the ungodly, what does it say?

*The earth is given into the hand of the wicked.*<sup>36</sup> What is the meaning of *The earth is given into the hand of the wicked*? The flesh is delivered into the hands of persecutors. But God has not left His just one there; from the captive flesh He brings forth the soul unvanquished. God would have left His just one in the hands of the ungodly, had He forced him to yield assent to the ungodly. It is to avoid this evil that the Psalmist prays elsewhere, in the words: *Give me not up, O Lord, from my desire to the wicked.*<sup>37</sup> What you need is not to fall prey through desire to the evil one; otherwise in your desire for temporal life you might fall into his clutches and so forfeit life everlasting. From what desire must a man not fall into the power of the evil one? From that of which another prophet has said: *And I have not desired the day of man, thou knowest.*<sup>38</sup> Suppose some man longs and hankers after man's day, and his foe threatens to deprive him of that day of human existence by killing him and so robbing him of his life. If such a one has no hope in another life, he gives way and yields consent to his enemy. But if he bears in mind our Lord's words: *Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul*, even though *the earth is given into the hand of the wicked*, while earth is prisoner the spirit goes free; and since the spirit escapes, the earth also will rise again. The spirit assumes a new nearness to God; earth also will be changed into heaven. Nor does anything perish of that earth which for the time being is delivered over to the evil one: *The very hairs of your head are all numbered.*<sup>39</sup> There is ground for confidence, then, provided that God is within. Once the devil is driven out, God gains admittance.

*But the Lord will not leave him in his hands, nor con-*

*demn him when he shall be judged.* Some copies give the text: "And when He judges him, there will be judgment for him." "For him" is said inasmuch as he will be the object of judgment; just as we can say to a man: "Give me a decision," that is, give my case a hearing. When, therefore, God proceeds to examine His just man's case—*For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ and take our place, that every one may receive there according as he hath done in the body, whether it be good or evil*<sup>40</sup>—when the man stands at that tribunal, He will not condemn him, even though at the time he may have appeared condemned by man. Even though the proconsul gave sentence against Cyprian,<sup>41</sup> the earthly magistrate's chair is one thing, the heavenly judgment seat another; from the lower he received a condemnation, from the higher a crown. *Nor will He condemn him when he shall be judged.*

14. But when will that be? Do not imagine it is in this present time. This is the time for toil, this the time for sowing, this the time for cold weather. Yet even though it be amid winds and rains, sow your seed and do not be idle; the summer will come to cheer you, and then you will be glad you have sown the seed. Meanwhile what am I to do? [V. 34] *Expect the Lord.* And whilst I am awaiting Him, what am I to do? *And keep His way.* And what shall I gain by keeping it? *And He will exalt thee to inherit the land.* What land? I repeat, you are not to think of some landed estate; it is that land referred to in the words: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*<sup>42</sup>

What of those who have caused us distress, the neighbors who have made us groan, those whose scandalous behavior

we have had to endure, those who raged against us and for whom we have prayed in vain, what will happen to them? The Psalm continues: *When the sinners perish, thou shalt see.* And you will have a very close view: you will be on the right hand and they on the left. This, however, is a matter for the eyes of faith. Those who do not see with the eyes of faith complain at the good fortune of the ungodly and suppose they themselves are living uprightly to no purpose, since they behold the wicked flourishing in this life. But if a man looks with that eye of faith, what does he say? [V. 35] *I have seen the wicked highly exalted and lifted up above the cedars of Libanus.* Well, suppose he is highly exalted, suppose he does tower above the rest; what follows? [V. 36] *And I passed by, and lo, he was not; and I sought him, and his place was not found.* Why was he no more, and his place nowhere to be found? Because you passed beyond that. But if you are still earthly-minded, and the happiness of this world seems to you to be true happiness, you have not yet passed by. You are either on his level or below it. Set forward and pass beyond him; and when you have done so, you will look at him by the light of faith, you will see his final doom and will say to yourself: "Look, that man who was so grand has ceased to be." You might merely have passed near some smoke. This is exactly what has been stated earlier on in this same Psalm: *They shall vanish like smoke.* Smoke rises into the air and spreads out into a globular mass; the farther it is carried upward, the more it expands. But when you have passed by, glance backwards; it is only smoke behind your back, if God is before your face. Do not cast lingering looks at what is past, like Lot's wife who was left behind on the way,<sup>43</sup> but look back in



contempt, and you will see the wicked is nowhere to be found; you will seek in vain for *his place*. What does *his place* imply? In proportion as he possesses power and wealth, he holds so to speak a position in human society, so that many people pay him court; he gives orders and is obeyed. His position will not last, but will pass away, and then you will be able to say: *I passed by, and lo he was not*. What is the force of *I passed by*? I set out, I advanced to spiritual things, I went into the sanctuary of God, and so *I understood concerning their last ends*,<sup>44</sup> and lo, he was not, and I sought him, and his place was not found.

15. [V. 37] *Keep innocence*. Cling to it, just as when you were a miser you clung to your purse. Just as you held tight to your purse, for fear it should be snatched away from you by a pickpocket, so guard your innocence, for fear it should be snatched away from you by the devil. Let that be your unquestioned patrimony which is common to rich and poor alike. *Keep innocence*. What will you gain by heaping up gold and forfeiting innocence? *Keep innocence and behold uprightness*.<sup>45</sup> Look straight ahead and keep uprightness in sight. Do not let your eyes stray to dwell on the wicked, nor lose your focus so that God appears to you crooked and distorted, apparently favoring the ungodly and persecuting the faithful. Can you not realize your eyes are squinting? Correct your sight and behold uprightness. What uprightness? Do not consider this present life. Then what are you to look at? *For there are remnants for the peaceable man*. What does *there are remnants* mean? When you have died, you will not be dead: that is the force of *there are remnants*. Such a man will have something left even after this life, namely, that seed which is to be in blessing.

Hence *He that believeth in me*, says our Lord, *although he be dead, shall live*.<sup>46</sup> *For there are remnants for the peaceable man.*

16. [V. 38] *But the unjust shall be destroyed together.* What are we to understand by *together*? Forevermore; or perhaps, all at once. *The remnants of the wicked shall perish.* But there are remnants for the peaceable man; hence those who are not peacemakers are impious. *Blessed, indeed, are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.*<sup>47</sup>

17. [V. 39, 40] *But the salvation of the just is from the Lord, and He is their protector in the time of trouble; and the Lord will help them and deliver them, and He will rescue them from the wicked.* Therefore, let the upright bear with the wicked for the time being, let the corn bear with the cockle, the wheat with the chaff. The time of separation will come, and the good seed will be rescued from that which is to be consumed by fire: the one will go into the barn, the other into everlasting burning.<sup>48</sup> For the good and the wicked formed one company in the first instance, so that the one might plot mischief and the other be put to the proof, that finally one might be condemned and the other receive a crown.

18. Thanks be to God, brethren, we have discharged our debt in Christ's name—though charity ever holds us debtors. For charity is the only debt which being daily discharged is daily owing. We have spoken a great deal against the Donatists, we have made public a good many things, several documents and much that went beyond the canon of the Scriptures, since they have compelled us to do so. If they find fault with us for reading you such things, let the blame fall on us, provided that you receive instruction. On this score we also can answer in this wise:

*I am become foolish, you have compelled me.*<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, brethren, before all things watch over our inheritance. In this regard we have a sure hope of finding ourselves in our Father's will and testament: not in any worthless document written by some human being, but in our Father's testament. This is the ground of our hope, namely, that He who has made the testament is living; He who has made the bequest to His heir is Himself to be the judge of His own will. In human life, the testator is one person and the judge another; he who has possession of the will, however, wins his case before the latter as judge, not before the deceased as judge. How certain then is our victory, since He who has made the will is to give the decision! For though Christ died at the appointed time, yet now He lives forevermore.

19. Therefore let their tongues wag as they will; let us love them in spite of themselves. Do we not know, brethren, do we not know those tongues of theirs? Let us not lose our temper with them on that account, but patiently bear with them as we do. They see they have no case, so they turn their tongues against us, and set to work to speak evil of us, saying much they know for certain and much they cannot know. What they do know is our own past life: it is true that we were once, as the Apostle says, unwise and incredulous, and reprobate to every good work.<sup>50</sup> Once we were the senseless and insane victims of a perverse error; we do not deny the fact. And the less we deny our past, the more do we praise God who has forgiven us.

Then why, you heretic,<sup>51</sup> do you leave the cause to attack its advocate? Pray, what am I? What am I? Am I the Catholic Church? Am I Christ's inheritance, spread throughout

the nations? For me it is enough to belong to it. You censure my past misdeeds: are you doing anything very fine? I am more severe against them than you are: what you have censured, I have condemned. If only you would copy my example, so that some day your wrongdoing too might be past and over! These bygone misdeeds they know best who have lived in this city.<sup>52</sup> Here, indeed, we lived an evil life and I acknowledge it. In proportion as I rejoice over the grace of God, so for my past I—what am I to say?—grieve? I should indeed grieve were I still in the same state. But what am I to say? Rejoice? I cannot say that, either: would I had never been so! But whatever I was, in Christ's name that is all over. They cannot pretend to know what they are now blaming. There are still things to blame in me, but they can hardly be expected to know them. I struggle a great deal with my thoughts, fighting against my evil suggestions and waging a daily and almost incessant warfare against the temptations of the enemy trying to overthrow me. I cry to God in my weakness, and He who has known me from birth knows also the travail of my heart. *But to me it is a very small thing*, says the Apostle, *to be judged by you, or by man's day; but neither do I judge my own self.*<sup>53</sup> For I know myself better than they do, but God knows me better still.

Let them not heap insults upon you on my account, then, Christ forbid! They say of us, indeed: "And who are these people? And whence are they? We knew them here as bad men; where have they been baptized?" If they are well acquainted with us, they know that at one time we crossed the sea, they know we lived abroad; they know that we were one man when we went away and another when we returned. We were not baptized here, but the Church<sup>54</sup> where we were baptized is known throughout



the world. And there are many of our brethren who not only know that we were baptized, but also received baptism together with us. So it is easy to ascertain this, if any of the brethren is anxious on the point. But must we be prepared to give satisfaction to these folk, and demonstrate something from the evidence of the Church with which they are not in communion? Rightly do they refuse to recognize our baptism beyond the seas, since they have no Christ beyond the seas. He has Christ beyond the seas who maintains communion with the Universal Church beyond the seas. How is a man to know where I have been baptized, when his own communion scarcely extends beyond the sea? Really, my brethren, what am I to tell them? Speculate as you please about us. If we are good, we are grains of corn in Christ's Church; if evil, we are chaff in Christ's Church, but whichever we are, we have not left the threshing floor. You who have flown away on the wind of temptation, what are you? It is not wheat that the wind blows away from the threshing floor. From *where* you are, then, realize *what* you are.

20. "But you," somebody says, "who are you, to level such grave accusations against us?" Whoever I may be, apply your mind to what is said, not to the person who says it. "Yet," he retorts, "the Lord says to the sinner: *Why dost thou take my covenant in thy mouth?*"<sup>55</sup> Well, supposing the Lord does speak thus to the sinner, perhaps there is a race of sinners to whom it is right that He should. Whoever it is that the Lord thus admonishes, He does so because the sinner gains nothing for himself from speaking about the law of God. But do the hearers gain nothing? In the Church we have both kinds, according to our Lord's words, good men as well as evil ones.

Now when the good preach, what do they say? *Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.*<sup>56</sup> What is said about them? *But be thou an example of the faithful.*<sup>57</sup> This we strive to be; what we actually are, He knows to whom we make complaint. About the wicked, however, something different is said: *The scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses: what they say, do, but according to their works do ye not.*<sup>58</sup> You see that on the chair of Moses, which has given place to the chair of Christ, the wicked also are seated; and yet as long as they teach sound doctrine they are no hindrance to their hearers. Why have you forsaken that chair itself because of the wicked? Return to peace, return to unity which gives you no occasion for scandal. If my words are good, if my deeds are good, imitate me; if, on the other hand, I do not act as I speak, you have our Lord's counsel. Do as I tell you and not as I do; only do not depart from the seat of Catholic unity.

I warn you, we are setting out in the name of Christ, and they will have a good deal to say. Where will it end? To begin with, drop all idea of defending me. Say nothing to such men but this: "Brethren, keep to the point. Augustine is a bishop of the Catholic Church; he has his own burden to bear, his own account to render to God. I reckon him among the good; whether he is wicked is known to himself, but even if he be good, that is not the ground of my confidence. This above all things have I learnt in the Catholic Church, that my hope must not be placed in a human being. It is reasonable for you to censure men, since you set your confidence in a man." Meanwhile when they do censure us, on no account must you take any notice. Knowing as we do the special place you hold in our heart, we can judge what kind of place we hold in

yours. Do not quarrel with them on our account. Whatever they say about us you must simply ignore, for fear that while concentrating on our defense you should lose sight of the cause at stake. This is a clever ruse of theirs. Since they reject and fear open discussion of the case, they level personal accusations to distract our attention, hoping that in the endeavor to clear ourselves we shall make no attempt to confute them. For if you call me a villain, I call myself that too, and can add plenty more. Get rid of all that, put an end to personalities, come to the point, give your mind to the question of the Church, look and see where you stand. From whatever quarter the truth speaks to you, receive it eagerly; otherwise, if you are captious and crafty and everlastingly bent on picking holes in the basket that contains it, you may never attain to tasting the bread.

#### DISCOURSE ON PSALM 37<sup>1</sup>

1. *I will declare my iniquity, and I will take thought<sup>2</sup> for my sin.* How suited to the words we have just chanted is the answer of this woman in the Gospel story! Our Lord, indeed, seeing her misdeeds at a glance, termed her a dog, saying: *It is not good to cast the bread of the children to the dogs.*<sup>3</sup> Yet she knew how to publish her iniquity and keep her sin in mind; therefore she did not deny what Truth affirmed; but she confessed her misery and so the more easily obtained mercy, for she had taken her sin to heart. She had, in fact, asked for her daughter to be healed, and the daughter was possibly a symbol of her own life. Pay attention, then, whilst we do our best to examine and discuss the whole Psalm. May the Lord be present to aid our hearts so that we may discover in

it profitable lessons and unfold them as they present themselves, experiencing no lack of ease in finding or competence in formulating them.

2. The title runs [Verse 1] *A Psalm for David himself, for a remembrance of the Sabbath*. We scrutinize what has been written for us about holy David the prophet, of whose race our Lord Jesus Christ was descended according to the flesh;<sup>4</sup> and among the good deeds the Scriptures recount of him, we never find any mention of his calling the Sabbath to remembrance. Why should he thus recall the Sabbath, considering how punctiliously the Jews observed it? Why call to remembrance in this way what of necessity recurred every week? His obvious duty was to observe it, not to commemorate it in this fashion. One only recalls what is no longer actually present. For instance, in this city you recall Carthage, which you visited a while ago; and today you remember yesterday, or last year, or some preceding one, and something you yourself once did, or somewhere you have been, or some event in which you took part. What does this recollection of the sabbath mean, my brethren? What soul recalls the sabbath in this way? What is this sabbath? For he is recalling it with a groan. When the Psalm was read you heard, and now when we reread it you will hear again, how intense is the Psalmist's sadness, how deep his groaning, how loud his lamentation, how profound his wretchedness. But happy is the man who is thus wretched. So it is that our Lord in the Gospel called some who mourn blessed.<sup>5</sup> What! Blessed because he is mourning? What! Blessed because he is wretched? Wretched rather would he be were he not mourning. Let us imagine this man, then, who is recalling the sabbath here, as some kind of mourner. Oh that this somebody were ourselves! For he



is one who mourns, sighs and weeps, recalling the sabbath. The sabbath implies rest. Obviously this man must have been prey to a certain disquietude, since he sighed at the remembrance of rest.

3. And so he relates the disquietude he has been suffering and lays it before God, fearing a yet more serious misfortune than that which already crushes him. For he frankly states that he is in trouble; there is no need for interpreter or for surmise or guesswork. His words leave us in no doubt about his suffering; no need for us to inquire, we have merely to notice what he says. Moreover, unless he were afraid of something worse than what had already laid hold of him, he would not begin with these words: [V. 2] *Rebuke me not, O Lord, in thy indignation,<sup>6</sup> nor chastise me in thy wrath.* For some men are to be chastised in God's wrath and rebuked in His indignation. Not all who are rebuked will be reformed; yet some will be saved in the course of correction. This will assuredly come to pass, for the correction has been specified by name: *yet so as by fire.* There will be some, however, who will be rebuked without being corrected. For the Lord will certainly reprove those whom He will tell: *I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink* and so forth; thus will He bring the reproach of vile and inhuman conduct against the wicked on His left hand, bidding them: *Depart into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.<sup>7</sup>*

In his dread of those more serious misfortunes, the speaker disregards this life which causes him to weep and groan with its misery, and makes his entreaty: *Rebuke me not, O Lord, in thy indignation.* Let me not be among those to whom thou wilt say: *Depart into everlasting fire which was pre-*

*pared for the devil and his angels. Nor chastise me in thy wrath.* Do thou cleanse me in this life and make me such that I shall have no need to pass through the purifying flames prepared for those who will be saved *yet so as by fire*. Why? Is it not because in this world they are building upon a foundation of wood, hay, stubble? If they constructed with gold, silver, precious stones, they would be safe from both kinds of fire, not only from the everlasting fire which will torment the wicked forever and ever, but also from that which will purify those who are to be saved by fire. For we are told: *He himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*<sup>s</sup> And because of the phrase *shall be saved*, that fire is not taken seriously enough. Clearly, although they will be saved by fire, yet that fire will be more grievous than anything a man is capable of bearing in this life. You know well enough how much the wicked have suffered and can suffer in this life: but they have suffered neither more nor less than the good also have had to suffer. For what penalty has the law inflicted on any malefactor, brigand, adulterer, criminal or temple violater, that a martyr has not suffered for confessing Christ? The evils of this life, then, are far easier to bear; and yet see how eagerly men will do anything you command rather than suffer them. How much better would it be for them to do what God commands, to avoid suffering those heavier penalties!

4. But why implore not to be rebuked in indignation or chastised in wrath? It is as though the Psalmist were saying to God: "Since the evils I endure are so many, so grievous, let them suffice, I beg of thee." And he begins to enumerate them, offering to God as a satisfaction all he now suffers, in order to suffer nothing worse. [V. 3]

*For thy arrows are fastened in me, and thy hand hath been strong upon me.*

5. [V. 4] *There is no health in my flesh because of thy wrath.* He has now entered upon the recital of his present woes, woes however which are the outcome of the Lord's wrath, because the outcome of the Lord's vengeance. What vengeance? The vengeance He wreaked upon Adam. Adam by no means escaped vengeance; otherwise there would have been no point in God's saying: *Thou shalt die the death.*<sup>9</sup> Nor do we suffer anything in this life except by reason of that death which we incurred through the first sin. We bear a mortal body, to be sure, which but for that sin would not be mortal, exposed to every temptation, full of cares, subject to bodily ills, subject to want, subject to change, weary even when sound, because as yet it never really enjoys complete health. For why did he say: *There is no health in my flesh*, if not because to men of true understanding who recall the sabbath, what is called health in this life scarcely merits the name of health at all? If you do not eat, you are vexed with hunger. This is a kind of natural ailment, since by way of vengeance our nature itself has been penalized. What was a penalty to the first man, is our very nature. That is why the Apostle declares: *And we were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*<sup>10</sup> *By nature children of wrath*, that is to say, bearers of its penalty. But why does he say *we were*? Because by hope we are so no longer, although in actual fact we still are. Yet we speak of something better which in hope we already are, because through hope we are sure of it. Our hope is not an uncertain hope that leaves us in doubt about it. Listen to what he says of this hoped-for glory: *We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the*

*adoption, the redemption of our body.* What does this mean? Have you, Paul, not yet been redeemed? Has not the price been paid for you? Has not that blood been shed already? Is it not the ransom for us all? Undoubtedly it is. But see what he says: *For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, we wait for it with patience.*<sup>11</sup> Now what is he waiting for with patience? Health and salvation.<sup>12</sup> Of what? Of the body; this is precisely what he has said: *the redemption of our body.* If he was awaiting health of body, then what he possessed was not health. Hunger and thirst will kill it if not relieved. Food is the remedy for hunger, drink the remedy for thirst, and sleep the remedy for weariness. Take away these remedies and then see whether conditions do not prove fatal. If, when these things are removed, no ill effects follow, we have perfect health. But if you labor under some disability which has power to kill you unless you eat, do not boast of health, but with sighs await the redemption of your body. Be glad that you are redeemed; but you must rest assured in hope, not yet in an accomplished fact. Unless indeed you sigh after it through hope, you will not attain to the reality.

This then is not health, says he: *There is no health in my flesh because of thy wrath.* What has caused the arrows to transpierce him? The penalty, the vengeance we have spoken of, perhaps also the pains of both mind<sup>13</sup> and body that must be endured in this life—these are what he terms arrows. Holy Job too has made mention of these arrows, and when undergoing his immense sufferings he declared that the Lord's arrows had transfixed him.<sup>14</sup> It is true we or-



dinarily regard arrows as God's words: but could he feel so much affliction at being pierced by them? God's words, even if they are like arrows, provoke love, not pain. Or is it because love itself cannot exist without pain? When we love anything we do not possess, we cannot but feel grief. A man loves without grief when he possesses the object of his love; but, as I said, he who loves and does not yet possess the object of his love, cannot help suffering and sighing. Hence the bride of Christ, in the person of the Church, utters these words in the Cantic of Canticles: *For I have been wounded with love.*<sup>15</sup> She declared herself wounded with love. She loved something as yet out of reach; she sorrowed because she did not yet possess it. If she sorrowed, then, she was wounded; but this wound brought her swiftly to truly perfect health. No one who has not been stricken with this wound can attain to true well-being. Is the wounded one, then, to suffer perpetually from his wound? Thus we can also take the arrows which transpierce as meaning: Thy words have wounded my heart, and these words of thine have made me recall the sabbath. This very remembrance of a sabbath which for the present I cannot keep, forbids me as yet to rejoice. I recognize that I have no health in my flesh, nor anything deserving of the name, as I contrast my present state with the health that shall be mine in everlasting rest. When this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality,<sup>16</sup> I see that in comparison with that health, this present state is no better than sickness.

6. *There is no peace for my bones because of my sins.* It is usual to ask who is speaking here. Some people think it is Christ, because of certain allusions to Christ's passion; we shall come to these presently and shall see for our-

selves that they predict the passion of Christ. But how could One who had no sin<sup>17</sup> declare: *There is no peace for my bones because of my sins?* We are compelled, then, to find the meaning of this by some consideration of what I may term the full and perfect Christ, that is, Head and Body. When Christ speaks, sometimes He speaks in the person of the Head alone, our Saviour Himself, born of the Virgin Mary, at other times in the person of His Body, which is holy Church spread throughout the world. And we are incorporated in Him on condition that we have sincere faith in Him, sure hope and burning charity. We are incorporated in Him, we are His members, and we find ourselves saying in the Apostle's words: *Because we are members of His Body,*<sup>18</sup> words which he often repeats. To object that these are no words of Christ is to deny also that these others are the words of Christ: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Yet in that passage you find: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Far from my salvation are the words of my sins.*<sup>19</sup> As you read in the one *because of my sins*, so you read in the other *the words of my sins*.

Now if Christ is in very truth without sin and without transgression, we begin to doubt whether those words of the Psalm can be His. Yet it would be very unfortunate and contradictory if the Psalm just quoted did not refer to Christ, when we find His passion set forth there as clearly as it is related in the Gospel. For there we find: *They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they cast lots.*<sup>20</sup> Why did our Lord Himself as He hung on the cross recite with His own lips the first verse of this very Psalm, saying: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*<sup>21</sup> What did He mean us to understand, but that

this Psalm refers to Him in its entirety, since He Himself uttered the opening words?<sup>22</sup> Where, again, it goes on to speak of *the words of my sins*, the voice is undoubtedly that of Christ. How *sins*, I ask, unless sins of His Body which is the Church? For here the Body is speaking as well as the Head. How do they speak as one person? Because *They shall be*, he says, *two in one flesh*. *This is a great sacrament*, observes the Apostle, *but I speak in Christ and in the Church*.<sup>23</sup> For the same reason, when our Lord Himself in the Gospel answered those who had questioned Him about putting away a wife, *Have you not read*, He said, *how it is written that God from the beginning made them male and female, and a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh*? Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh.<sup>24</sup> If, then, He Himself has said: *Now they are not two, but one flesh*, what wonder if the one flesh has but one tongue uttering the selfsame words of Head and Body as of one human being? So we must listen as to one person speaking, but the Head as Head and the Body as Body. We are not separating two persons but drawing a distinction in dignity: the Head saves, the Body is saved. The Head must show mercy, the Body bewail its misery. The office of the Head is the purgation of sins, that of the Body the confession of them; yet there is but one voice, and no written instruction to inform us when the Body speaks and when the Head. We can tell the difference as we listen; but He speaks as one individual. Why, indeed, should He not speak of *my sins* who said: *I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me not in; I was sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me*? Our Lord

was certainly never in prison. Why should He not say this, who when asked: *When did we see thee hungry and thirsty, or in prison, and did not minister to thee?*, replied that He had spoken thus in the person of His Body: *So long as you did it not to one of these least of mine, neither did you do it to me?*<sup>25</sup> Why should He not say: *because of my sins*, who said to Saul: *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*<sup>26</sup> Being in heaven, obviously He was no longer suffering under any persecutor. But just as the Head was spokesman for the Body, so here too the Head speaks the language of the Body, although you can also distinguish the accents of the Head. You may never exclude the Head when you hear the Body speaking, nor the Body when you hear the Head speaking; for now they are not two but one flesh.

7. *There is no health in my flesh because of thy wrath.* But possibly God is in the wrong to be angry with you, O Adam, O human race, possibly God is angry unjustly? For you have already acknowledged this punishment of yours, and taking your place as a human being in Christ's Body, have said: *There is no health in my flesh because of thy wrath.* You must show, therefore, the justice of God's anger, otherwise you will appear to be excusing yourself and accusing Him. Continue, and state the reason for the Lord's anger. *There is no health in my flesh because of thy wrath: there is no peace for my bones.* He has repeated his thought. *There is no health in my flesh* means the same as *there is no peace for my bones*. Nevertheless he has not repeated *because of thy wrath*; but he has given the reason for God's anger: *There is no peace for my bones*, he admits, because of my sins.

8. [V. 5] *Because my iniquities have lifted up<sup>27</sup> my head, as a heavy burden they are become heavy upon me.*



Here he has both premised the cause and added the effect, stating what happened and why. *My iniquities have lifted up my head.* Nobody is arrogant but the wicked man, who goes with his head in the air. He is high and mighty who raises his head against God. You heard when the lesson was read from the Book of Ecclesiasticus: *The beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God.*<sup>28</sup> The moment a man refuses to obey God's command, iniquity has made him rear his head against Him. And because iniquities have lifted his head high, how has God treated him? *As a heavy burden they are become heavy upon me.* To lift up the head is a sign of elation, as if he who did so had nothing to carry. Hence, because what can be uplifted is light, he is given a burden to bow him down. His sorrow recoils on his own head, and his iniquity descends upon his crown.<sup>29</sup> *As a heavy burden they are become heavy upon me.*

9. [V. 6] *My sores are putrefied and corrupted.* To begin with, one who has sores is not in good health. Furthermore, these sores have putrefied and corrupted. Whence the corruption? From the putrefaction. Of course, everybody knows how to explain this in relation to human life. And the man who has a sound spiritual nose can tell how sins stink. Clean contrary to this stench of sin was that odor of which the Apostle speaks: *We are the good odor of Christ unto God in every place, in them that are saved.*<sup>30</sup> Whence the perfume, if not from hope? Whence, if not from the recollection of the sabbath? We complain of one thing in this life and look for another in the next. What we complain of is foul, what we look for smells sweet. Were there no such fragrance to attract us, we should never remember the sabbath. But since the Holy Spirit has made us perceive that fra-

grance, so that we say to our Beloved: *We will run after the odor of thy ointments*,<sup>31</sup> we avert our noses from our own rottenness, and turn to Him in order to breathe rather more freely. Yet unless our ill-deeds likewise stink in our own nostrils, we shall never make confession with such complaints as these: *My sores are putrefied and corrupted*. From what cause? *Because of my foolishness*. Just as he formerly said *because of my sins*, so he now says *because of my foolishness*.

10. [V. 7] *I am afflicted with miseries*<sup>32</sup> *and am bowed down even to the end*. Why has he been bowed down? Because he had been elated. If humble, you will be uplifted; if elated, you will be bowed down; God can easily find a weight to crush you. This will be the weight: the burden of your sins. It will recoil upon your own head and you will be bowed to the ground. Now what does it mean to be bowed down? Not to be able to stand upright. Our Lord found a woman in this state; she had been bent double for eighteen years and could not raise herself upright. That is what they resemble whose hearts are fixed on earth. However, since that woman met with our Lord who healed her, she must respond to the invitation: Lift up your heart. But in so far as he is bowed down, man feels afflicted. The man who cries: *For the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things*<sup>33</sup> is bent double. He must groan aloud at the miseries if he is to receive the healing; he must remember the sabbath and thus be entitled to attain to it. That sabbath which the Jews observed was a symbol. Of what reality? Of that which the man has in mind when he declares: *I am afflicted with miseries and am bowed*

*down even to the end.* What does *even to the end* mean? Even unto death.

*I walked sorrowful all the day long. All the day long—*without respite. *All the day long*, he says, meaning his whole lifetime. But when did he first realize it? When he began to reflect on the sabbath. And as long as he has his mind on something he does not possess, would you not have him walk in sorrow? *I walked sorrowful all the day long.*

11. [V. 8] *For my soul is filled<sup>34</sup> with illusions, and there is no health in my flesh.* Wherever there is a complete man, there is body as well as soul. But when the soul is filled with illusions, and the flesh diseased, what source of gladness is left? Is not sadness inevitable? *I walked sorrowful all the day long.* We must of necessity be sad, until our soul is stripped of illusions and our body arrayed in good health. Now well-being truly worthy of the name is immortality. If I tried to recount all the soul's illusions, when should I find time enough? Whose soul is not a prey to them? I shall give a short instance to prove how our soul is filled with illusions. These illusions at times scarcely allow us to pray. We can think of material objects only by forming images; often enough those we do not want break in, and we eagerly snatch at this and that, and flit hither and thither. Sometimes you want to return to a previous reflection and drop the thread of your present thought, when something fresh suggests itself. You want to remember what you have forgotten, but it eludes your mind; something else you did not want comes instead. Where was what you had forgotten? Why, for example, did it afterwards recur to your mind when you were no longer looking for it? But whilst you were, any number of things which were not required presented themselves in its place. I

have touched upon the matter briefly, brethren: I have flung out a few hints, and if you take them and work out the rest for yourselves, perhaps you will discover what it means to bewail the illusions to which our soul is subject.

The Psalmist, then, has been punished with illusions; he has lost sight of the truth. Just as illusion is the soul's punishment, so is truth its reward. But while we were plunged in a world of unrealities, Truth came to us, and finding us wrapped up in empty illusions, took upon Himself our flesh, or rather took it from us, that is to say, from the human race. He appeared to our eyes of flesh to heal through faith those to whom He intended to set forth the truth, so that our eye once restored to health might see His resplendent truth. For He Himself is that truth which He promised us when He was seen in the flesh, in order to initiate us into the faith whose reward is truth. It was not His essence, but only His flesh, that Christ manifested on earth. If He had shown Himself as He was, the Jews would have seen and recognized Him; but if they had recognized Him, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory.<sup>35</sup> It is possible that the disciples saw, when they said to Him: *Show us the Father, and it is enough for us*; and He, to make it clear that they had not seen Himself, replied: *So long a time have I been with you, and have you not known me? Philip, he that seeth me seeth the Father also*. If, then, they could see Christ, why were they still seeking for the Father, since to see Christ is to see the Father also? Thus, since they wished to be shown the Father, it was evident that they did not as yet see Christ. Let me make it clear that they did not as yet see Him: He promised them elsewhere



that sight as a reward: *He that loveth me, He said, keepeth my commandments; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him.* And, as though asked: "If you love him, what sign will you give him?", He added: *And I will manifest myself to him.*<sup>36</sup> Hence, if He has promised as a reward to those who love Him that He will manifest Himself to them, this vision of the Truth thus promised to us is evidently such that when we have once enjoyed it, we shall have no further reason to say: *My soul is filled with illusions.*

12. [V. 9] *I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly.* A man has only to recall the transcendence of the sabbath to measure how deeply he has been humbled. On the other hand, one who is unable to raise his thoughts to that height where tranquillity dwells, does not realize his present position. So we read in another Psalm: *I said in my excess of mind: I am cast away from before thy eyes.*<sup>37</sup> This is what has happened. In a transport of soul he has beheld something indescribably sublime, but was not yet wholly lost in what he saw. A kind of lightning flash, if it may be so termed, of light eternal lit up the scene, so to speak, and made him feel that he had not yet attained to it. In so far as he could understand, he realized where he stood, and to what degree enfeebled and fettered with human ills; whereupon he cried: *I said in my excess of mind: I am cast away from before thy eyes.* Such is the ineffable vision seen in ecstasy, that it makes me realize how far off I am, who have not yet attained to it. That man had already attained, who declared that he had been taken up to the third heaven and there heard words beyond the power of speech, not granted to man to utter. But he had been called back to us to bewail his necessity of first being made perfect in

infirmity, in order afterwards to be clad with power. Filled with courage, however, after having been shown a glimpse of these wonders, the better to administer his charge, he added: *I heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter.*<sup>38</sup> Now what is the use of expecting either me or anyone else to tell you what no man is allowed to utter? If he was not allowed to utter them, would anyone be allowed to hear them? But at least let us weep and mourn as we make confession, let us realize where we stand, bear in mind the sabbath, and await in patience the promise of Him who showed forth in His person the model of patience for our sake. *I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly.*

13. *I roared with the groaning of my heart.* You often hear God's servants break their prayer with groans, and people wonder why. There is nothing outwardly obvious, merely the groaning of some servant of God, when, that is, it actually does reach the ears of the man next him. For there is a hidden groaning which human ears cannot catch. However, if a man's heart is so obsessed with the thought of some longed-for object that his inward suffering is expressed very audibly, somebody will want to know the reason, and will say to himself: "Perhaps such and such a thing has caused his grief; perhaps this or that is the matter with him." Who can know, except He in whose sight and hearing the suppliant groans? The reason why he says: *I roared with the groaning of my heart* is because when men hear another man groaning, what they hear is often the groaning of the flesh, they do not hear the groaning of the heart. Somebody has gone off with this man's goods; he was roaring aloud but not through grief of heart. One man is lamenting because he has lost his son, another his wife; this man because his

vineyard has been spoilt by hail, his cask of wine has turned sour, some unknown thief has stolen a beast of his, that man because he has suffered some loss, the other man because he fears a personal enemy. All these are roaring with the groaning of the flesh. But since God's servant is crying out because he remembers the sabbath, where the kingdom of God is to be found, which neither flesh nor blood shall possess,<sup>39</sup> *I roared*, he can say, *with the groaning of my heart*.

14. Now who has realized the cause of his groaning? He has added: [V. 10] *And all my desire is before thee*. Not indeed before men, who cannot see into the heart: but *before thee is all my desire*. Set your desire on Him, and the Father who sees in secret will repay you.<sup>40</sup> This very desire of yours is your prayer; and if your desire is continual, your prayer is continual too. It was not for nothing that the Apostle said: *Pray without ceasing*.<sup>41</sup> Can we unceasingly bend our knees, bow down our bodies or uplift our hands, that he should tell us: *Pray without ceasing*? No; if it is thus he bids up pray, I do not think we can do so without ceasing. There is another way of praying, interior and unbroken, and that is the way of desire. Whatever else you are doing, if you long for that sabbath, you are not ceasing to pray. If you do not want to cease praying, do not cease longing. Your unceasing desire is your unceasing prayer. You will lapse into silence if you lose your longing. Who did lapse into silence? Those of whom it has been said: *Because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold*.<sup>42</sup> The coldness of charity is the heart's silence; its glowing ardor, the heart's outcry. If charity is always present, you are ever crying out; if always crying out, you are ever longing; if longing, you have not forgotten repose.

It is important to understand in whose presence your heart raises its cry.

First of all consider what kind of desire we ought to lay before the eyes of God. Should it be the death of an enemy of ours, which men wish for with an air of righteousness? Truth to tell, sometimes we pray for things we ought not. Let us look at some prayers which people consider lawful. They pray that some person may die and his inheritance fall to them. But those who pray for the death of an enemy should take heed of what our Lord says: *Pray for your enemies*.<sup>43</sup> They should pray, not that their enemies may die, but that they may reform; then the enemies will be dead, since being reformed they will be enemies no longer. *And all my desire is before thee*. What if the desire is before Him and the actual groaning is not? Would it be possible, since the groaning is merely the expression of the desire? Therefore the Psalmist continues: *And my groaning is not hidden from thee*. From thee it is not hidden; from many a human being it is. Sometimes one hears a lowly servant of God crying: *And my groaning is not hidden from thee*. And sometimes one sees the same servant of God with a cheerful face: has that desire perished from his heart? No; if the desire is always within, so too is the groaning: it does not always come to the ears of men, but it is never absent from the ears of God.

15. [V. 11] *My heart is troubled*. Why? *And my strength hath left me*. Very often some sudden shock strikes us; the heart is troubled. The earth quakes, the heavens thunder, there is some terrible onrush or uproar, possibly a lion is seen at large; our heart trembles. Robbers lie in ambush, the heart is prey to anguish, panic-stricken, pierced by anxiety on every side. Why all this?



Because *my strength hath left me*. If that strength had remained steadfast, what would there be to fear? Whatever bad news there might be, whatever might rage or roar, crash or affright, would not inspire terror. But what causes this disquiet? *My strength hath left me*. What has made my strength leave me? *And the light of my eyes is not with me*. The light of his eyes failed Adam, for instance, for the light of his eyes was God Himself; and after offending Him, Adam fled to the shadows and hid himself among the trees of Paradise.<sup>44</sup> He trembled with fear before God's face and sought refuge in the shade of the trees. Amid the trees he no longer beheld the light of the eyes he had been wont to enjoy. If it was thus with him as the origin, it is thus with ourselves also as his offspring. Members of the first Adam, we must return to the second, or rather the last Adam, for the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit;<sup>45</sup> and incorporated in His Body, that cry: *And the light of my eyes is not with me* becomes our own confession. What! After his confession of sin, after being redeemed and incorporated in Christ's Body, can we say that the light of his eyes is no longer with him? Certainly we can. It is not with him. There is, however, sufficient to give a certain kind of recollection of the sabbath, as if contemplating it in hope; but there is not yet the fulness of light implied in the words: *I will manifest myself to him*.<sup>46</sup> We have a certain amount of light, in that we are the sons of God, and already we hold it by faith; but it is not yet that light which we are one day to contemplate. *It hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is*.<sup>47</sup> For the moment ours is the light of faith and the light of hope. For *while we are in the body, we*

are absent from the Lord. (For we walk by faith, and not by sight.<sup>48</sup>) And if we hope for that which we see not, we wait for it with patience.<sup>49</sup> Now these are the accents of travelers still on their journey who have not yet reached their native country. Rightly and truly does the Psalmist speak thus, and since he is no hypocrite, he sincerely acknowledges: *And the light of my eyes is not with me.* All this constitutes man's inward suffering; he endures himself, by himself and within himself, suffering from nobody's action and for nobody's profit but his own: all he has just recounted, he has incurred as his own personal penalty.

16. But is this all that a man has to suffer? No; he suffers inwardly from himself, and also outwardly from those among whom he lives: without reckoning his own ills, he is forced also to endure other people's. Hence the double request: *From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare thy servant.*<sup>50</sup> He has already confessed his own sins, from which he longs to be cleansed: he must also mention other men's, from which he would wish to be spared.

[V. 12] *My friends.* What more need I say about enemies? *My friends and my neighbors have drawn near and stood against me.* Do you grasp the implication of his phrase *stood against me*? If they stood against me, they fell to their own undoing. *My friends and my neighbors have drawn near and stood against me.* Here again we must recognize the language of our Head, here again see our Head appear in His passion, haloed with light. On the other hand, when the Head begins to speak, you must take care not to dissociate His Body from Him. If the Head refused to dissociate Himself from the words of His Body, shall the Body dare to dissociate itself from

the sufferings of its Head? Suffer in Christ; for Christ contracted sin, if I may say so, in your frailty. A little while ago He took your sins on His own lips, appropriating them and calling them His. He said, if you remember, *because of my sins*, although they were not His own. Just as He wished to make our sins His own for the sake of His Body, so must we wish to make His sufferings our own for the sake of our Head. If He suffered from friends turned traitors, shall not we? Nay more, we must be prepared to fare exactly as He did: we must not reject such a chalice, and then following His humility we shall reach that height of glory of His which is our goal. He replied, as you know, to some who aspired after His glory but had scarcely yet thought of His humility, with the question: *Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?*<sup>51</sup> Hence those sufferings of our Lord are our sufferings too; and if any one serves God loyally, keeps his word, renders to each his due and leads an honest life among his fellow men, I should like to see whether he will not have to suffer, yes, even those very trials Christ recounts in His passion.

17. *My friends and my neighbors have drawn near and stood against me. And my neighbors*<sup>52</sup> *stood afar off.* Which neighbors drew near, and which stood afar off? The Jews were His neighbors, for they were His kinsmen: they drew near, even when they crucified Him. The apostles were His neighbors, yet they held themselves aloof for fear of suffering with Him. This can also be interpreted in another way: *My friends*, meaning those who pretended to be my friends. They made a show of friendliness, when they said: *We know that thou teachest the way of God in truth.*<sup>53</sup> When they wanted to put Him to the test as to whether tribute should be paid to

Caesar, and He convicted them out of their own mouths, they were anxious to appear as His friends. However, He did not need assurances about any man, for He knew what was in man<sup>54</sup> so well that although their words were friendly, He replied: *Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites?*<sup>55</sup> *My friends and neighbors, then, have drawn near and stood against me. And my neighbors stood afar off.* You realize my meaning? I have spoken of the neighbors who drew near and yet stood afar off. They drew near, in fact, in body, but stood afar off in heart. Physically, who were so near as those who uplifted Him on the cross? Spiritually, who were so far off as those who blasphemed Him? Listen to the prophet Isaias speaking of this great separation, notice how he applies the nearness and remoteness: *This people with their lips glorify me—physically, you see, they draw near—but their heart is far from me.*<sup>56</sup> The very same people were near at hand and afar off: kinsmen in speech, strangers at heart. However, since the apostles stood at a distance in their fear, we can take it more simply and plainly as referring to them, and so interpret how some drew near and some stood at a distance. Peter for instance, who had followed Him very boldly, was actually so far removed that when questioned and harassed he thrice denied our Lord, with whom he had volunteered to die.<sup>57</sup> But later on, after the Resurrection, in order that he who had stood afar off might draw near, he was asked: *Lovest thou me?*, and answered: *I do love thee.*<sup>58</sup> And so speaking he who had placed himself at a great distance by his denial drew close, until his threefold avowal of love cancelled his threefold denial. *And my neighbors stood afar off.*

18. [V. 13] *And they that sought my soul used violence.* It is easy to see who they were that sought His



soul; they did not possess His soul because they did not form part of His Body. Those who sought His soul were far removed from it but aimed at its destruction. For there is also a right way of seeking His soul since in another passage He makes the reproach: *And there is no one that hath regard to my soul.*<sup>59</sup> He reproves some who do not seek His soul, and on the other hand reproves some who do. Who seeks His soul in the right way? The man who imitates His sufferings. Who are those that sought His soul in a wrong way? Those who used violence to Him and crucified Him.

19. The Psalm continues: *They that sought my misdeeds spoke a vain thing.*<sup>60</sup> What does *They that sought my misdeeds* mean? They looked everywhere and found nothing. Perhaps it would imply: They looked for charges against me. They did, indeed, seek for evidence to bring against Him, and found none.<sup>61</sup> They were searching for evils in Him who was good, they were searching for crimes in Him who was innocent: were they ever likely to find them in Him who had no sin? But since they were looking for sins in Him who had none, they must perforce invent what they could not discover. Hence *They that sought my misdeeds spoke a vain thing*—not the truth. *And studied deceit all the day long:* that is, they incessantly plotted treachery. You know all the false evidence brought against our Lord before His passion. You know how much was brought even after His resurrection. For those soldiers who kept guard at the sepulcher of whom Isaias had said: *I will give the ungodly for his burial,*<sup>62</sup> were ungodly indeed: they had no wish to speak the truth, and accepted bribery to broadcast a lie. Notice what nonsense they talked. They were questioned in person and replied: *His disciples came and stole*

*Him away when we were asleep.*<sup>63</sup> That is talking nonsense. If they were asleep, then, how could they know what had happened?

20. Therefore the Psalmist goes on: [V. 14] *But I, as a deaf man, heard not.* In making no answer to what He heard, He acted as though He did not hear. *But I, as a deaf man, heard not, and as a dumb man not opening his mouth.* And the Psalm repeats the same thing: [V. 15] *And I became as a man that heareth not, and that hath no reproofs*<sup>64</sup> *in his mouth.* As if He had nothing to say to them, as if He had no cause for reproof. Had He not previously censured many things, inveighed against many things, had He not said: *Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,*<sup>65</sup> and much more to the same purpose? Yet when He came to suffer, He said nothing of all this. Not that He had nothing to say, but He was waiting for them to do to Him all that had been foretold, and for all the prophecies to be fulfilled in His regard. For it had been said of Him: *And as a sheep dumb before his shearers, he opened not his mouth.*<sup>66</sup> Hence it befitted Him to keep silence during His passion; He will not keep silence at the judgment. He had come to be judged who Himself would afterwards sit in judgment, and would sit in judgment with all the greater power precisely because He had submitted to judgment with such deep humility.

21. [V. 16] *For in thee, O Lord, have I hoped; thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.* It is as though He had been asked: Why hast thou not opened thy mouth? Why hast thou not said, No further? Why, hanging on the cross, didst thou not reprove the ungodly? The Psalmist proceeds: *For in thee, O Lord, have I hoped; thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.* He has counseled you what to do if

by chance trouble befalls. To take an instance. You need a defense, and possibly nobody will undertake it. Thereupon you are acutely distressed, thinking you have forfeited the whole issue, because you have nobody to defend you or give evidence in your favor. Maintain your innocence within your own soul, where nobody can override your case. False witness has prevailed against you, but only before men: will that carry any weight in the eyes of God, before whom you must finally be tried? When God sits in judgment, no other witness will be called but your own conscience. Between the just Judge and your own conscience you need be anxious over nothing but your cause itself; unless it is a bad one, you need stand in terror of no accuser, refute no false witness, feel the want of no trustworthy one. Merely bring forward a good conscience, and you will be able to say: *For in thee, O Lord, have I hoped; thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.*

22. [V. 17] *For I said: Lest at any time my enemies scoff<sup>67</sup> at me; and whilst my feet are moved, they speak great things against me.* Once more He reverts to the frailty of His Body, and again that Head of ours considers His feet. He is not in heaven in such a manner as to lose interest in His members on earth; evidently He is attentive and beholds us. For sometimes, life being what it is, our feet falter and stumble into some misdeed: thereupon our enemies' vile tongues break loose. From this we can see what they were searching for even when silent. Then these merciless creatures load us with abuse, exultant as they are at finding what they ought rather to have deplored. And *I said: Lest at any time my enemies scoff at me.* I have spoken thus, and yet perhaps it was for my correction thou didst make them triumph over me, *whilst*

*my feet were moved.* They were elated; many a malicious word did they spread when I lost my footing. They ought indeed to have had pity on the weak, not scoffed at them, according to the Apostle's recommendation: *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness.* He concludes with this reason: *considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*<sup>68</sup> Those of whom the Psalmist said: *And whilst my feet are moved, they speak great things against me,* were not of this nature; but they resembled those of whom he says elsewhere: *They that trouble me will rejoice when I am moved.*<sup>69</sup>

23. [V. 18] *For I am ready for scourges.* These words are uttered with great solemnity, as though to say: For this was I born: to suffer scourgings. Any one who deserved scourging could be born only from Adam. But sometimes sinners are punished in this life either not at all or less than they deserve, because their line of conduct is already beyond hope of amendment. Those, on the other hand, for whom life everlasting is being prepared, must of necessity be afflicted in this world, according to the truth of this maxim: *My son, reject not the correction of the Lord, and do not faint when thou art chastised by Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.*<sup>70</sup> So my enemies need not hurl insults, they need not boast in triumph. Even if my Father chastises me, *I am ready for scourges,* because my inheritance is in store for me. If you will not bear correction, you shall not receive an inheritance; for chastisement is the lot of every son. So true is it, that He has not even spared Him<sup>71</sup> who had no sin.<sup>72</sup> *For I am ready for scourges.*

24. *And my sorrow is continually before me.* What



sorrow? Perhaps that arising from chastisement. And indeed, brethren, I tell you the truth, men grieve over their chastisement but not over the reason for it. The Psalmist was not of that kind. Take my word for it, brethren, if anybody suffers some loss, he is more inclined to say: "I have suffered undeservedly," than to consider why he has suffered; he will grieve over the loss of money, not over that of rectitude. If you have sinned, be sorry for the loss of your inner treasure: your house is empty, but your heart is possibly more so. If, on the other hand, your heart is full of its treasure, that is to say, your God, why not say: *The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord?*<sup>73</sup>

What is the cause of the Psalmist's grief? The chastisement he was suffering? Nothing of the kind. *And my sorrow*, he says, *is continually before me*. Then, as though we were asking, "What sorrow, and from what cause?": [V. 19] *For I will declare my iniquity, and I will take care for my sin*. Here is the reason for his grief. It is not because of his punishment; it is because of the wound, not the remedy. For punishment is the antidote to sin. Mark my words, brethren. We are Christians; nevertheless, often enough when a man's son dies, he bewails him; when he falls into sin, he does not. When he sees him committing sin, then is the time to weep and grieve over him. Then is the time to draw the line, to lay down the rule of right living, to teach the lesson. If, however, a man has already done so, and the other refused to listen, then indeed the offender is a subject for tears. Then was he more completely dead through riotous living than if death had put an end to his dissipation; then, in a word, whilst behaving in this way in your own home he was

not only dead but stinking. This is the thing to be deplored, the other endured; the other to be borne manfully, this to be lamented. Lamented, yes; in the same way as you have heard this man lament: *For I will declare my iniquity, and I will take care for my sin.*

But you are not to feel at ease after confessing your sin, as though equally ready at any time to confess a sin and to commit it again.<sup>74</sup> You must declare your iniquity in such a manner as to be careful of your sin. What do I mean by being careful of your sin? Taking care of your wound. If you were to say, "I will take care of my wound," what would people understand by that except "I will do my best to get it healed"? That is the meaning of being careful of a fault: ever to strive, ever to bend your efforts, ever to act carefully and sedulously so as to remedy the sin. Here are you, day by day, lamenting your sin, but your tears may be streaming and your hands idle. Give alms, make reparation for your sins, let some needy person rejoice at your gift, so that you too may rejoice at God's. That beggar is in need, so are you; he needs your help, you need God's. You despise the man who needs your help, and will not God despise yourself in need of His? So you must satisfy the wants of the needy, if God is to satisfy your soul. That is the meaning of *I will take care for my sin*: I will do whatever I ought to do to efface and to remedy my sin. *And I will take care for my sin.*

25. [V. 20] *But my enemies live.* They prosper, they rejoice in worldly good fortune, whilst I endure fatigue and roar aloud in the groaning of my heart. What kind of life do this man's enemies live? He has already told us that their speech is all lies. Listen to another Psalm: *Whose sons are as new plants well established.* It had previously stated: *Whose mouth hath spoken vanity; their*

*daughters decked about after the similitude of a temple; their storehouses full, flowing out of this into that; their oxen fat; their sheep fruitful in young, multiplying in their goings forth; there is no breach in fence nor crying out in their streets. My enemies are full of life, then, and this is their life. This is the life they praise and love, this the life they cherish to their own undoing. Well, what follows? They have called the people happy that hath these things. But what about you, who are anxious over your sin? What about you, who openly publish your wrongdoing? Happy, says the Psalmist, is that people whose God is the Lord.<sup>75</sup>*

*But my enemies live and are stronger than I; and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.* What does *they that hate me wrongfully* mean? They hate one who wishes them well. If they repaid evil for evil, they would not be good; if they did not repay good for good, they would be ungrateful; but to repay good with evil is to add hatred to injustice. Such were the Jews. Christ came to them with blessings; they repaid His blessings with injuries. Beware of this evil, brethren; it easily creeps in. Although we have said: "Such were the Jews," none of you need consider himself far and away exempt from it. Supposing one of your brethren reproves you, meaning it for your good; if you conceive hatred for him, you are behaving in exactly the same way. Realize how quickly and easily it may happen, and avoid an evil so great, a fault so easily committed.

26. [V. 21] *They that render evil for good have detracted me, because I pursued<sup>76</sup> justice.* Hence the evil in return for good. What does *I pursued justice* mean? I have never forsaken it. For fear you might suppose that "pursuit" has always a bad meaning, the author has used

the word *persecutus*—*perfecte secutus*, I have perfectly followed<sup>77</sup>—*Because I perfectly followed justice*. Listen once more to our Head crying out in His passion: They have cast me forth, the beloved One, like a man dead and accursed.<sup>78</sup> As if being dead were not sufficient, why add “accursed”? Because He was crucified. For this death by the cross they held in the deepest loathing, since they did not realize that the words *Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree*<sup>79</sup> were a prophecy. It was not He that brought death; He found it here, handed down from the first man’s curse; and taking upon Him that same death of ours, which had originated from sin, He hung it up on the tree. For this reason nobody must suppose, as certain heretics do suppose,<sup>80</sup> that our Lord Jesus Christ did not possess real flesh and did not die a real death upon the cross. The prophet grasps the whole import of this and cries out: *Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree*. He shows thereby that the Son of God died the real death which is the lot of mortal flesh: otherwise, had He not been cursed, you might have supposed He did not really die. Since, however, His death was no illusion but a legacy inherent to the descendants of the man upon whom God had laid the curse: *You shall die the death*, and since beyond all doubt real death came to Him that real life might come to us, so also the curse of death came to Him, that we might receive the blessing of life. And they have cast me forth, the beloved One, like a man dead and accursed.

27. [V. 22] *Forsake me not, O Lord my God: do not thou depart from me*. Let us speak in His person, let us speak through Him, for He *maketh intercession for us*;<sup>81</sup> let us exclaim: *Forsake me not, O Lord my God*. Notwithstanding that He had said: *My God, my God, why*



*hast thou forsaken me?*<sup>82</sup> He now says: *My God, do not thou depart from me.* If God never forsakes the Body, could He have forsaken the Head? Whose speech could this have been, but that of the first man? To show that it was from him, therefore, that He derives true human flesh, our Lord cries out: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* God had not forsaken Him. If He does not forsake you who believe in Him, would the one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, be likely to forsake Christ? But He had transferred to Himself the person of the first man. For we know that, in the Apostle's words, *our old man is crucified with Him.*<sup>83</sup> We should not have got rid of our old nature, had not He been crucified in weakness. He came of set purpose to give us new life in Himself, for we are made new by longing for Him and following after His passion. Hence the voice that cried: *Why hast thou forsaken me?* was that of weakness; it was our voice. That is why He speaks of *the words of my sins*, as though to say: These words are transferred to myself from the person of the sinner. *Do not thou depart from me.*

28. [V. 23] *Attend unto my help, O Lord of my salvation.* This is that salvation, brethren, for which, as the apostle Peter says, the prophets searched, yet for all their searching did not receive; but they inquired and prophesied, and we have come and found what they had searched for.<sup>84</sup> And notice, we ourselves have not yet received it; and others shall come after us and find without receiving, and they too will pass away; so that at the end of the day, with the patriarchs and prophets and apostles, we may all together receive the penny which denotes salvation. For of course you have heard of the hired laborers or workmen who were sent into the vineyard at dif-

ferent times and yet received the same amount in wages.<sup>85</sup> Both the prophets, then, and the apostles, the martyrs, we ourselves and those who will come after us to the very end of the world, all in that final settlement will receive everlasting salvation; then contemplating the glory of God and beholding His face, we shall praise Him forevermore, without intermission, free from penalty of sin, free from sinful perversity, praising God, and no longer sighing, but united to Him whom we have ever made the object of our desires and the joy of our hope. We shall have our place in that city where our well-being will be God, our light will be God, our bread will be God, our life will be God! All that constitutes our blessedness, from which we are separated in our present toil, we shall find in Him. In Him will be that tranquility of which we cannot think at present without grief. For that is the sabbath we call to remembrance, in whose recollection so much has been said, and so much remains for us to say, and speaking never to grow weary, at heart if not with mouth; for the silence of our lips only enables our hearts to cry out the more eloquently.



## NOTES





## NOTES

### FIRST DISCOURSE ON PSALM 30

These brief, dry notes of exegesis establish the literal sense of the Psalm. They were probably dictated to a stenographer. Paul Capelle assigns this swift commentary on the Psalm to an early period in Augustine's ministry, and the three sermons which follow to the year 415 or thereabouts.

<sup>1</sup> The title *pro extasi* is wanting in several ancient Latin codices, in the Greek, and in the Hebrew. Augustine used in the main the African Latin Psalter (see Capelle, *op. cit.*). The revised Latin text of the Psalms published in 1945 omits this title and substitutes *Magistro chori*: "To the choirmaster." The title *pro extasi* would seem to be derived from verse 23 of the Psalm, and suggests that the former reading was different: *in pavore meo dixi, hoc est in extasi mea*; cf. Ps. 67.28: *extasis namque est mentis excessus*. St. Jerome (*Ep.* 108) says that the Latin codices read *in pavore*.

<sup>2</sup> *Erue me et exime me*; Vulgate: *libera me et eripe me*.

<sup>3</sup> *Muscipula*, literally "a mousetrap"; cf. Ps. 123.7: *Anima nostra . . . eruta est de muscipula venantium*, where the Vulgate reads *laqueo*. Augustine always used the popular text, and Dom de Bruyne suggests that he possibly employed this startling word in order to ensure that the populace understood.

<sup>4</sup> An echo of Rom. 8.20.

<sup>5</sup> John 19.24.

<sup>6</sup> Douay reads: *Which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee*. The Latin verb *abscondere* may mean "to store up" or "to make invisible." The Douay version adopts the first sense, Augustine the second.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Pet. 4.18.

<sup>8</sup> *Et retribuet his qui abundanter faciunt superbiam*. The Vulgate groups *retribuet abundanter*. Dom de Bruyne again suggests that Augustine's chief care was for clarity of thought.

### SECOND DISCOURSE ON PSALM 30

<sup>1</sup> Sermon 1. Delivered shortly after the feast day of the Apostles, July 411 or 412. The three sermons on Ps. 30 which follow

the short exegesis were preached by Augustine outside his own diocese, as the last sentence of this first sermon proves: *psalmo peracto proficiscamur*. From internal evidence Dom de Bruyne concludes that they were preached at Carthage, since, like others certainly delivered there, they make constant reference to the theater, amphitheater and circus.

<sup>2</sup> According to the custom in Africa, the lector either read out the Psalm or it was solemnly sung in a responsorial manner so that the people took their part in the chant and were able to retain certain portions in mind.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 10.4.

<sup>4</sup> H. Urs von Balthasar (*Über die Psalmen*, Intr.) has pointed out how Augustine seizes upon the almost incomprehensible text of the Old Latin Psalter and reveals its surpassing beauty at just those verses which offer most difficulty. In an appraisal of the revised Latin text of the Psalter issued in 1945, Fr. Dubarle, O.P., writes: "Ce n'est pas l'hébreu, ce n'est pas une traduction idéale qu'ont commentés les Pères de l'Eglise; c'est ce psautier [that is, the Old Latin Psalter] qu'il est question d'abandonner. Les aspérités du texte qui arrêtent, dit-on, l'esprit avaient excité leur ingéniosité . . . [et leur ont] souvent fourni l'occasion de profondes considérations" ("Une nouvelle traduction liturgique du Psautier," *Vie spirituelle* 73 [1945] 36).

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. 5.13,14.

<sup>6</sup> Phil. 2.6,7.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. 12.2.

<sup>8</sup> In her Vesper Office of the Circumcision, the Church embodies this thought in one of the loveliest antiphons of the liturgy: *O admirabile commercium*.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 26.38.

<sup>10</sup> Eph. 5.23. "This is the reason of St. Augustine's doctrine: . . . that Christ, the mystical Head, and the Church, which like another Christ represents His Person on earth, together constitute one new man joining heaven and earth in the continuance of the saving work of the cross. Christ, Head and Body, is the whole Christ" (Pope Pius XII, *Mystici corporis*).

<sup>11</sup> Acts 9.4.

<sup>12</sup> A favorite thought: "I have said it very often, but as it is an apt illustration I shall repeat it. When someone treads on you in a crowd, it is your foot he treads on, he has not harmed your tongue. Why is it, then, that your tongue cries out: 'You are treading on me?'" (*Serm.* 261.14; *In Joann. tract.* 1.8).

<sup>13</sup> John 21.18.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 1.1.

<sup>15</sup> Phil. 2.7.

<sup>16</sup> Gen. 2.24; Matt. 19.5,6.

<sup>17</sup> Eph. 5.31,32.

<sup>18</sup> Isa. 61.10 Cf. St. Hilary, *In Matt.* 27: "Sponsus atque sponsa, Dominus noster est in corpore Deus. Nam ut spiritus carni (sponsus), ita spiritui caro sponsa est."

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor. 12.12.

<sup>20</sup> John 15.5.

<sup>21</sup> Rom. 6.21.

<sup>22</sup> Wisd. 4.20.

<sup>23</sup> Matt. 25.41.

<sup>24</sup> Rom. 4.5.

<sup>25</sup> *Implere justitiam*, an echo of Matt. 3.15.

<sup>26</sup> Rom. 9.32.

<sup>27</sup> Gal. 3.19.

<sup>28</sup> Rom. 10.2,3.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 3.23.

<sup>30</sup> Augustine was speaking of the games at Carthage from the depths of his own experience; cf. *Conf.* 6: "At Carthage, the maelstrom of ill morals—and especially the passion for idle spectacles—had sucked him [Alypius] in, his special madness being for gladiatorial shows."

<sup>31</sup> Rom. 7.22-25.

<sup>32</sup> John 8.6.

<sup>33</sup> Gen. 3.19.

<sup>34</sup> As Augustine observes in his Commentary on Ps. 36, he adopted in popular sermons a "barbarism" of speech suited to the capacity of his audience. This passage, which stresses in such simple language the so-called cosmological proof of God's existence, may be compared with the magnificent opening of *De trinitate* 5 (ML 42.911) written some twenty years later, and with *Conf.* 7.

<sup>35</sup> Augustine's mind found a special attraction in the contemplation of the mystery of time and the transience of the created world. Time is to be reckoned, not in things, but in the soul of man: it is *distensio animae*, spiritual extensions. Cf. *Conf.* 4.11.

<sup>36</sup> Here Augustine speaks of the world having reached old age. But in *Ep.* 199 he expressly discourages the contemporary assumption that the world was approaching its end, and in *De civ. Dei*



12.12 he even considers the possibility of the world's being still in existence 500,000 years hence.

<sup>37</sup> A ruling thought that often recurs. Newman, devoted Augustinian that he was, appealed to this supreme and changeless voice of conscience as one of the most constructive proofs of theism: "If, as is the case, we feel responsibility, are ashamed, are frightened, at transgressing the voice of conscience, this implies that there is One to whom we are responsible. . . . 'The wicked flees when no one pursueth'; then why does he flee? whence his terror? Who is it that he sees in solitude, in darkness, in the hidden chambers of his heart?" (*Grammar of Assent* [5th ed. London 1881] 109-10).

<sup>38</sup> Ps. 138.7,8.

<sup>39</sup> Luke 10.30.

<sup>40</sup> John 8.48. Fr. Hugh Pope, discussing Augustine's advice that poor preachers should take somebody else's good sermon, learn it by heart, and proceed to preach it "provided they do so in the name of him who wrote it," remarks: "Probably every preacher has at one time or another annexed someone else's sermon. How many have publicly acknowledged whence they got it?" Certainly the Fathers of the Church seem to have borrowed freely from one another, although it was possibly the scribe who omitted to acknowledge the source! In the Gospel homily read at Matins of Passion Sunday, St. Gregory the Great, who frequently quotes Augustine, has taken this thought and with a slight expansion has repeated it: "Now Samaritan is interpreted 'watchman'; and He is truly a watchman of whom the Psalmist says: *Unless the Lord keep the city, they watch in vain that keep it*, and to whom Isaias said: *Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?* Hence the Lord would not reply: 'I am not a Samaritan'; but: 'I have not a devil.' Both these accusations were leveled against Him. The one He denies, the other, by holding His peace, He admits" (*Hom. 18 in evang.*).

<sup>41</sup> In this sublime passage Augustine employs an allegory, supported by 1 Pet. 2.2 and 1 Cor. 3.2, which constantly recurs in ancient Christian tradition. Milk symbolizes the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, and eternal felicity. Frescoes in the catacombs, such as that in the crypt of Lucina or the mural painting in the cemetery of St. Callistus, depict the Good Shepherd with a jar of milk. Clement of Alexandria uses the symbol in reference to our Lord's body (*Paedagogus* 3.7), and the African martyr, St. Perpetua, in vision was given curd from sheep's milk to indicate

that death was in store. "Christ is the virgin who bore us," says St. Ambrose, "who fed us with her milk" (*De virginibus* 5). It is interesting to note the persistence of the same idea in the devotion of the fourteenth-century English mystic, Julian of Norwich, to "Christ our Mother."

<sup>42</sup> Matt. 4.3,9,6; Ps. 90.11,12.

<sup>43</sup> Luke 4.13.

<sup>44</sup> Ps. 117.13.

<sup>45</sup> *Una ecclesia non patitur persecutionem, alia patitur*: literally, "One church is not undergoing persecution, another is"; cf. Apoc. 1.7. The defense of the Church as an outward, visible society in which good and bad are intermingled was never far from Augustine's thought in his constant warfare against the Donatists.

<sup>46</sup> Luke 5.6.

<sup>47</sup> Matt. 21.38-42. This Gospel is now read at the Mass of Friday during the second week of Lent.

<sup>48</sup> Luke 23.46.

<sup>49</sup> John 19.30.

<sup>50</sup> Ps. 21.1,17-19.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

<sup>52</sup> Any English translation falls far short of all the implications of the Latin *vanitas*. In the exposition of this verse, Augustine plays unceasingly upon the double meaning of the word: in ordinary Latin, *vanitas* implies deception and falsehood; as a Biblical expression, it is a common term for false gods; cf. Deut. 32.21 and Jer. 8.19. The *observantes* of the Vulgate may be taken to mean "worshippers." Underlying the exposition of this verse, there is possibly a veiled attack upon Manichaeism. The God of Truth is the only reality. Far from there being two principles in the world, good and evil, as the Manichaeans maintained, all that is opposed to God is a negation lacking substance, a privation of good, mere *vanitas*.

<sup>53</sup> Isa. 40.6.

<sup>54</sup> Douay here reads: *Thou hast saved my soul out of distresses*, a translation which has been retained in the first Commentary on this Psalm, where Augustine is bent only upon ascertaining its true literal sense. But it must never be forgotten that in his homilies on the Psalms he is addressing his audience in everyday language and is not bound to adhere to any one sense of a given word. From his play upon the words *necesse . . . necesse est*, it is obvious that he is thinking here of the inevitable lot of human nature.

<sup>55</sup> 2 Cor. 5.1-4.

<sup>56</sup> Rom. 7.23.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 10.3.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* 8.10-13.

<sup>59</sup> Matt. 7.14.

### THIRD DISCOURSE ON PSALM 30

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 12.26.

<sup>2</sup> *Aliquae ecclesiae*: literally, "some churches."

<sup>3</sup> Again and again Augustine recurs to the burning question of schism. He appeals to the single principle of the Church of Christ being the *corpus Christi*, and bewails the tragedy of amputating a limb from that Body as the Donatists had done.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 24.12.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. 39.6.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 5.6.

<sup>7</sup> The faithful made the response *Amen* after the priest had pronounced the words of Consecration at Mass, which were said aloud for all to hear, and also after receiving the Holy Eucharist; cf. *De catech. rud.* 13; *Contra litt. Petiliani* 2.174.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. 24.13.

<sup>9</sup> Ps. 68.10.

<sup>10</sup> Ps. 118.53.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 158.

<sup>12</sup> *Male vivens*, an emendation by the Benedictine editors, who point out that all MSS. read *male evadens*, "turn out ill."

<sup>13</sup> Eph. 4.26.

<sup>14</sup> Matt. 7.3.

<sup>15</sup> 1 John 2.9.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Thess. 3.8.

<sup>17</sup> Phil. 1.23,24.

<sup>18</sup> Acts 10.12,13.

<sup>19</sup> Matt. 16.18.

<sup>20</sup> Ps. 37.10.

<sup>21</sup> Ezech. 15.2.

<sup>22</sup> 2 Pet. 2.20-22.

<sup>23</sup> 3 Kings 19.10; Rom. 11.3,4.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Enarr. in ps. 54*, n. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Douay renders this verse: "They that saw me without fled from me," but it is obvious from the context that Augustine understood it in the sense indicated in the translation.

<sup>26</sup> Ps. 2.8. This whole passage is an open attack upon those Donatists who were guilty either of lethargy or of invincible ignorance. Donatism was almost 100 years old when Augustine appeared on the scene and with ruthless logic pointed out the inevitable result of the long separation from the true Church: "Heresy is a schism grown old. . . . You are certainly heretics from the fact that you remain in your schism which has grown old" (*Contra Cresconium* 2.9-10).

<sup>27</sup> Ps. 21.28.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. "Heretics are united with good people in this world, not by the bond of the One Church or the One Faith, but solely by the bond implied in their title of 'Christian'" (ML 35.1367, quoted by Fr. Hugh Pope, *op. cit.*).

<sup>29</sup> Gen. 21.2,3.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 22.3.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 22.16-18, not exactly as the Vulgate.

<sup>32</sup> 1 John 2.19.

<sup>33</sup> A favorite image of Augustine, this idea being the underlying theme of his *City of God*; namely, the transcendent character of the eternal and heavenly city in contrast to the mutability and wickedness of the temporal and earthly city.

<sup>34</sup> Ps. 82.14.

<sup>35</sup> Ps. 11.9.

<sup>36</sup> Augustine here speaks from the experience of his own spiritual pilgrimage as described in the *Confessions*.

<sup>37</sup> Paraphrased from Jer. 17.5.

<sup>38</sup> *Mammothbreptus*.

<sup>39</sup> See Introduction to Vol. 1 (ACW 29) for a sketch of the Donatist schism. The deacon Caecilian, elected to the see of Carthage in 311, recognized by the Pope and Emperor as validly consecrated, was bitterly opposed by Donatus, Bishop of Casae Nigrae in Numidia, and by the schismatic party which he organized.

<sup>40</sup> 1 Cor. 1.13.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Ps. 101.27.

<sup>42</sup> Acts 1.25.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 1.26.

<sup>44</sup> John 19.23.

<sup>45</sup> Eph. 2.8-10. Augustine, who is known as the *doctor gratiae*, spent the last eighteen years of his life combating the insidious Pelagian heresy. Pelagius denied original sin and Christian grace, maintaining that the moral strength of the human will unaided



by grace was sufficient to attain perfection, Christ's life and redemptive act being in the nature of instruction and example, a counterbalance, so to speak, to Adam's wicked example. It was due in large measure to Augustine's writings against Pelagius that the Church clarified and developed her dogmas of original sin and grace.

<sup>46</sup> Rom. 9.14.

<sup>47</sup> Augustine is here possibly alluding to the legend given in the Apocryphal *Acts of Peter*, and quoted by the African writer Arnobius of Sicca (d. 305), which tells how Simon Magus, in an attempt to win over the Emperor Nero and defeat Sts. Peter and Paul at Rome, offered to ascend into heaven from the Roman Forum in the sight of all. By magic he did rise into the air, but at the apostles' prayer he fell and was so severely injured that he died shortly afterwards. The stones of the pavement on which the two apostles knelt and which are reputed to bear the impression of their knees are now in the wall of the Church of St. Frances of Rome. That Augustine was familiar with the Apocryphal *Acts of Peter* we know from other sources; see J. Christopher, *St. Augustine, The First Catechetical Instruction* (ACW 2; Westminster, Md. 1946) note 279.

<sup>48</sup> Acts 8.13-21, slightly different from the Vulgate. Augustine employed the Old Latin version of St. Cyprian when quoting Acts. See J. Christopher, *op. cit.*, note 278.

<sup>49</sup> Ps. 2.8.

<sup>50</sup> The Africans must certainly have loved sermons, during which they remained standing throughout. It is here obvious that Augustine was delivering these long commentaries on successive days; sometimes he preached his sermons on the Psalms in the morning and afternoon of the same day (*Enarr. 1 in Ps. 88*, n. 29).

#### FOURTH DISCOURSE ON PSALM 30

<sup>1</sup> Typical of Augustine the preacher is this acknowledgment of the difficulty he sometimes experiences in finding a satisfactory explanation of certain passages in the Psalms. He often takes his audience into his confidence and invites them to assist him by thought and prayer.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 6.12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 5.8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 6.12.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 3.12; Luke 3.17. When Augustine was ordained in 391, the Catholics in North Africa were a persecuted and downtrodden minority lacking all leadership, and there were scandals not only among the Catholic laity but even among the bishops; cf. *Epp.* 209, 85, 77 and 78. On the other hand, sanctity also reached heroic heights, as Augustine constantly testifies; cf. *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et Manichaeorum* 1.65-67, 69, 77.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. 42.1.

<sup>7</sup> Carthage contained a large merchant class, and Augustine's words must often have made the commercial men in his audience blush.

<sup>8</sup> Ps. 13.5; Ps. 52.6.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *In Joann. tract.* 102, which the Church uses in her Office of Matins for the fifth Sunday after Easter.

<sup>10</sup> *Gratis invoca.* "Do not ask God to pay His footing in coin of this world when He visits your heart. St. Augustine's words are directed against those who, when they pray, want temporal blessings, but not God Himself at all" (Joseph Rickaby, S.J., *Readings from St. Augustine on the Psalms* [London 1925] 9).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Luke 16.24.

<sup>12</sup> Wisd. 4.20.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 5.1-5.

<sup>14</sup> Ps. 33.9.

<sup>15</sup> Prov. 1.7; Ps. 110.10.

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 10.33.

<sup>17</sup> That the Christian body was numerically strong at least in Hippo, we can gather from one of Augustine's sermons on the feast of St. Lawrence. "In this city," he says, "there are many houses in which there is not even a single pagan, nor a single house in which there is not a Christian" (*Serm.* 302.19). And in a sermon on Ps. 88: "For long Christians did not dare answer a pagan; now, thank God, it is a crime to remain a pagan." Augustine is probably reckoning Donatists among the Christian body.

<sup>18</sup> Rom. 10.10.

<sup>19</sup> Augustine has an interesting parallel to this passage in *In Joannem tract.* 2, from which it is obvious that the sign of the cross was one of the first ritualistic acts the catechumens learned: "If you ask a catechumen: 'Do you believe in Christ?', He answers: 'I do,' and signs himself with the sign of the cross. He displays it on his forehead and does not blush at the cross of his Lord."

<sup>20</sup> Migne reads *Multis enim fidelibus* but adds a note, *Forte nominibus*, which alone seems to suit the context. An alternative reading is *significationibus*. Migne's emendation has been here adopted.

<sup>21</sup> John 12.3.

<sup>22</sup> Cant. 1.2.

<sup>23</sup> Acts 1.9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 8.1.

<sup>25</sup> Ps. 93.18.

<sup>26</sup> Matt. 14.26-32.

<sup>27</sup> Job 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 2.9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

<sup>30</sup> Rom. 12.19.

<sup>31</sup> Isa. 35.3; Heb. 12.12.

#### FIRST DISCOURSE ON PSALM 31

This Psalm, which deals so powerfully with the bitter burden of unconfessed sin, and the peace of heart which follows upon humble confession, was one of Augustine's favorite Psalms and was pinned on the walls by his bedside as he died. As in Ps. 30, Augustine has first dictated a swift literal commentary on the text before proceeding to preach on the Psalm.

<sup>1</sup> *Ipsi David intelligentiae*. The Hebrew title gives "To David, a Maskil." *Maskil*, rendered in the Vulgate *intellectus*, and in Augustine's African version *intelligentia* ("of" or "for instruction") occurs in the titles of thirteen Psalms and is variously interpreted. The primary meaning would seem to be that of an instructive or didactic poem, the sense in which it occurs in Ps. 46.8: *Sing ye hymns intelligently (maskil)*. St. Jerome gives as the title *David eruditio*, that is, "David's instruction."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rom. 4.7. Vulgate and Hebrew text read *whose spirit*, not *whose mouth*.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 10.10: *with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*.

<sup>4</sup> *Configeretur*, Vg. *configitur*.

<sup>5</sup> See Discourse on Psalm 4, n. 4: "One may regard *diapsalma* as a Hebrew word meaning 'So be it,' or as a Greek word denoting a pause in the psalmody."

<sup>6</sup> Vg. and Hebrew read *my sin*, not *my heart*.

<sup>7</sup> Possibly a reminiscence of Heb. 10.17: *He [Esau] found no place of repentance, although with tears he had sought it.*

<sup>8</sup> Vg. and Hebrew read *will instruct*, not *will set*.

## SECOND DISCOURSE ON PSALM 31

<sup>1</sup> This sermon was preached to the people of Carthage. The note which prefaces it in the Regius and Monte Cassino MSS. runs as follows: *Habitus quinta feria in basilica Restituta*. P. Capelle places the sermon probably about 415, whereas Dom de Bruyne assigns a much earlier date, pointing out that in 403 St. Jerome possesses "quosdam commentariolos in psalmos" by Augustine—probably the *Enarrationes* on the first thirty-two Psalms. Bardenhewer assigns the year 396 to the early commentaries. The *Corpus christianorum* editors date this sermon Thursday, January 413. The church known as *Restituta* was the most famous of all the great Carthaginian basilicas, and was also called the *Basilica Major* as being the cathedral church of the bishops. Its third title was *Basilica Perpetuae*, since it contained the bodies of the famous martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas, who were regarded as its patrons. Augustine often preached there, and it was the scene of the African Councils of 390 and 401.

<sup>2</sup> The Scripture lesson was evidently from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chapter 4, in which the Apostle quotes the first two verses of the Psalm. Other passages from the same chapter are quoted by Augustine in the course of his sermon. It is probable he had arranged the subject matter of the reading of lesson and Psalm beforehand, in order to prepare the way for his own discourse. On one occasion he had to change his sermon at the last moment because an absent-minded lector sang the wrong Psalm; cf. *Enarr. 1 in ps. 138*, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. 6.19.

<sup>4</sup> This is written over a thousand years before Luther was to boast of being the first to proclaim the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Actually even the Pelagians announced nothing new, for as Augustine points out in *De fide et operibus*, the heresy had been propounded by the Antinomists and combated by the apostles themselves. Augustine's writings, as the exposition of this Psalm proves, did much to formulate the Catholic teaching that justification (namely, holiness and the state of adopted sons of God) is the work of God alone, presupposing in the human



being co-operation of his free will with God's grace (*gratia praeveniens et cooperans*).

<sup>5</sup> Ps. 100.1: *Mercy and judgment I will sing to thee, O Lord.*

<sup>6</sup> Some MSS. read *audivimus*, "we have heard."

<sup>7</sup> Prov. 4.27.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. 4.1,2.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. 1.31.

<sup>10</sup> Rom. 4.3; Gen. 15.6.

<sup>11</sup> James 2.21. In *De fide et operibus* 14, Augustine expressed the opinion that the apostles James, Peter, John and Jude had directed their Epistles against certain of the Gnostic sects of that time who claimed to have taken their doctrines from St. Paul. This view, which was widely held, has been abandoned by modern exegetes, who consider that the Epistles were written quite independently of one another and from different standpoints.

<sup>12</sup> Gal. 5.6.

<sup>13</sup> Rom. 13.10.

<sup>14</sup> Gal. 5.14; Lev. 19.18.

<sup>15</sup> Rom. 13.9,10; Exod. 20.14; Lev. 19.8.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor. 13.13.

<sup>17</sup> Possibly this should read, not *propter* ("is for the sake of") but *praecepti* ("of the law is").

<sup>18</sup> 1 Tim. 1.5.

<sup>19</sup> Rom. 3.28.

<sup>20</sup> Gal. 5.6.

<sup>21</sup> Ps. 36.27.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Cor. 13.2,3.

<sup>23</sup> Rom. 4.5.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 1.25.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 3.23.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 4.3,4.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 6.23. Augustine had made a special study of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans and its teaching on grace, as a passage in the *Retractationes* (1.23,1) proves. At Carthage he was studying the Epistle with some friends "who questioned him on certain passages," and although only a priest at the time, he tells us that his replies already refuted Pelagianism.

<sup>28</sup> Luke 10.30.

<sup>29</sup> Rom. 4.5,6.

<sup>30</sup> Ps. 35.4.

<sup>31</sup> Matt. 23.27,28.

<sup>32</sup> John 1.47,48.

<sup>33</sup> Ps. 50.7.

<sup>34</sup> Matt. 21.19.

<sup>35</sup> Ps. 50.11.

<sup>36</sup> 2 Cor. 12.8-10.

<sup>37</sup> 1 Cor. 4.7.

<sup>38</sup> The keynote of the Donatist schism was the claim that they alone were holy and constituted the true Church. "‘We are the good odor of Christ,’ says St. Paul, but you Donatists say: ‘Africa alone breathes forth a sweet odor, the rest of the world stinks!’" (*Enarr. 2 in ps. 21, n. 2*).

<sup>39</sup> Ps. 33.19.

<sup>40</sup> Luke 18.8-14. On this parable see also Augustine’s *Serm. 36 De verbis Domini*, from which are taken the homily lessons of the breviary for the tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

<sup>41</sup> Ps. 50.5,11.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Prov. 20.9.

<sup>43</sup> Another reading gives: "The hand of Him who raised him up was as light as the hand of Him who humbled him was heavy."

<sup>44</sup> *Pronuntiabo*. Vg. gives *confitebor*, "I will confess."

<sup>45</sup> Ps. 140.4,5.

<sup>46</sup> Ps. 40.5.

<sup>47</sup> Gal. 4.4,5: *mulier*, a word not generally used of a virgin.

<sup>48</sup> Rom. 7.24.

<sup>49</sup> 2 Cor. 6.2.

<sup>50</sup> Ps. 3.9.

<sup>51</sup> Prov. 5.15. Vg. gives *de tua cisterna*, "out of thy own cistern."

<sup>52</sup> Rom. 4.5.

<sup>53</sup> This is a reference to the Manichees, who held that in the beginning there were two principles, one Good, one Evil, God and Satan, each of whom had his kingdom, the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness, continually at war with each other. Augustine’s personal experience of Manichean teachers and their doctrines is graphically set forth in Books 3-8 of his *Confessions*.

<sup>54</sup> Ps. 91.2. The substance of what follows—involving the double meaning of "confession" as acknowledgment of sins on the one hand and praise of God on the other—will be found in his own experiences as set forth in the *Confessions*.

<sup>55</sup> Ps. 40.5.

<sup>56</sup> Phil. 2.8.

<sup>57</sup> John 14.6.

<sup>58</sup> Ps. 33.19.

<sup>59</sup> Another reference to the Manichees and their elaborate system of aeons and demons in conflict over man.

<sup>60</sup> Rom. 12.12.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 8.23-25.

<sup>62</sup> *Statuam.* Vg. gives *instruam*, translated by Douay "I will instruct."

<sup>63</sup> Matt. 6.31.

<sup>64</sup> 1 Peter 5.7.

<sup>65</sup> Ps. 24.15.

<sup>66</sup> Isa. 1.3.

<sup>67</sup> Ps. 72.7.

<sup>68</sup> Matt. 21.7.

<sup>69</sup> Ps. 24.9.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Ps. 83.8: *For the lawgiver shall give a blessing.*

<sup>71</sup> Rom. 4.5.

<sup>72</sup> Ps. 13.1.

<sup>73</sup> See n. 18 above.

<sup>74</sup> Ps. 72.1,11,2.

<sup>75</sup> 1 Cor. 6.17.

<sup>76</sup> Rom. 5.3-5.

<sup>77</sup> Job 1.21.

<sup>78</sup> Heb. 12.6.

<sup>79</sup> 2 Tim. 4.6-8.

<sup>80</sup> Matt. 26.38,39.

#### FIRST DISCOURSE ON PSALM 32

This forms the last of the brief exegetical notes which characterize Psalms 1-32, and which were apparently dictated at an early date in Augustine's ministry.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 12.1.

<sup>2</sup> *In psalterio decachordo psallite ei*, whereas in the following sermon Augustine chooses the variant which now stands in the Vulgate: *In psalterio decem chordarum psallite ei*. The first reading is taken from the African Latin Psalter; the second is interesting as showing St. Jerome's influence on the popular text.

<sup>3</sup> Douay reads: *And all His works are done in faithfulness*. It is evident, however, from the context both here and in the following Discourse (n. 9) that Augustine interprets *in fide* as the theological virtue of faith.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. James 1.17.

<sup>5</sup> This idea is more explicitly worked out by St. Gregory the Great: "For since our Lord says by the prophet: 'Heaven is my seat'; and Solomon says: 'The soul of the just is the seat of wisdom'; and Paul also says: 'Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God'; we ought obviously to conclude that if God is wisdom, and the soul of the just the seat of wisdom, therefore when God's throne is termed 'heaven,' this heaven is the soul of the just" (*Hom. in evang.* 38). *Anima iusti sedes sapientiae*, quoted by St. Augustine, by St. Gregory, and by St. Bernard (*In Purif. serm.* 1; *De verbis Isaiae serm.* 5; *In Cant. serm.* 27) is usually referred to Wisd. 7, but neither the Vulgate nor the Septuagint gives anything exactly like this text. A reminiscence occurs in the advice of Dame Julian of Norwich to Margery Kempe: "Holy Writ saith that the soul of a rightful man is the seat of God" (*The Book of Margery Kempe: A Modern Version* by W. Butler-Bowdon [New York 1944] 34).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Rom. 6.4.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. 12.17.

## SECOND DISCOURSE ON PSALM 32

<sup>1</sup> *In Mapalibus. Per vigilias sancti martyris Cypriani* (Naples 13). Both the sermons which follow were preached at Carthage in the basilicas dedicated to St. Cyprian. The first was delivered in the "Mappalitia" of the *area Macrobi* where his body lies buried; cf. *Acta proconsularia sancti Cypriani*, which tell how, after his execution, St. Cyprian's body was carried away by the Christians, "with prayers and with great triumph, to the graveyard of Macrobius Candidianus the procurator, which is on the road to Mappala near the reservoirs." The second discourse was given in the "Memoria" of *Ager Sexti* where he shed his blood. A third church in his honor stood near the seashore and was the witness of St. Monica's tearful night vigils when her son departed for Rome. At the close of the second sermon Augustine tells his audience that he will address them on the morrow at the "Basilica Tricliarum," but the discourse is no longer extant. *Corpus christianorum* dates these two sermons as Wed., Aug. 26, 403, but says they were preached at Hippo, which cannot be correct.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 26.39.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 25.35.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 9.4.



<sup>5</sup> Ps. 33.2.

<sup>6</sup> Job 1.21.

<sup>7</sup> According to ancient usage, the priest administering the Holy Eucharist said *Corpus Christi*, to which the communicant, who received the sacred species into his cupped hands, answered *Amen*.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. 1.17.

<sup>9</sup> *Certantem expectat*. The Benedictine editors point out that Augustine uses the verb *expectare* in the sense of *observare*.

<sup>10</sup> See *Enarr. 1 in ps. 32, n. 2*.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Serm. 311.5*. The Church often took over and sanctified the cult previously paid to heathen gods, converting the pagan temples into churches, as had been done at Carthage in the "Basilica Coelestis" (See Pope, *op. cit.* 71). St. Cyprian was held in enormous veneration, his feast being prepared for by a fast of three days, yet in the early days of his episcopate Augustine had to combat the disgraceful orgies which marked certain Christian feasts, even in the churches themselves.

<sup>12</sup> Possibly a reference to Ps. 42.5. See also *Enarr. 2 in ps. 70, n. 11*.

<sup>13</sup> One who thinks in terms of modern harps with their so-called forepillar and complete lack of sound chest may miss the drift of Augustine's words in this famous passage. The ancient harp which was in use until the eighth century, the *cithara* of the Vulgate, translated in the Douay version as "harp," was the kithara (zither), an instrument of the lyre type. The sound chest consisted originally of a tortoise shell covered on the outside with stretched leather, the concave back being joined directly to a flat soundboard from edge to edge. One of the Homeric hymns describes the invention of the *lyra* by Hermes, from tortoise-shell and sheep-gut strings. A remarkable Ship Grave, found in August 1939 at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk, England, contained among other treasures a sealskin bag holding a dismantled Saxon harp of the seventh century A.D. This harp, reconstructed by Mr. Arnold Dolmetsch and exhibited at the British Museum, seems to tally exactly with Augustine's description. The resonator which is at the base was missing but has been reconstructed from Saxon manuscripts and inscriptions. It is a small quadrangular instrument, asymmetrically designed about the peg-arm and with six strings between 11½ and 12½ inches long.

<sup>14</sup> The "Sumerian harp of Ur" dating from *ca.* 2700 B.C. at the British Museum has eleven strings; others have been found with

as many as fifteen; a Babylonian vase shows two harps with five and seven strings respectively; cf. *Conf.* 3.8: "By these we live evilly against the three and the seven, the ten-stringed psaltery, the ten Commandments given by thee, O God most high and most gracious."

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 5.45.

<sup>16</sup> Wisd. 8.1.

<sup>17</sup> Ps. 138.7,8.

<sup>18</sup> Job 1.21.

<sup>19</sup> Matt. 22.40.

<sup>20</sup> Deut. 6.4; Mark 12.29.

<sup>21</sup> Deut. 5.11.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 5.12. There seems to have been a large Jewish population in Carthage, as in all large cities. That their behavior was far from edifying is evident from other passages; cf. *Serm.* 9.3: "Jewish women would do better if they spun wool on the Sabbath than spend the entire day in a frenzy of immodest dances."

<sup>23</sup> John 8.34.

<sup>24</sup> Ps. 36.4.

<sup>25</sup> Exod. 20.1-17; Deut. 5.6-21.

<sup>26</sup> Matt. 5.17.

<sup>27</sup> Ps. 84.13.

<sup>28</sup> In his *Confessions* Augustine tells of the powerful effect music had upon him and of his fear that his soul was moved by the aesthetic pleasure of its beauty rather than by the truth of the sacred words.

<sup>29</sup> See *Enarr.* 1 in ps. 32, n. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Rom. 1.17.

<sup>31</sup> Gal. 5.6.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Cor. 10.13.

<sup>33</sup> 2 Tim. 2.12,13.

<sup>34</sup> Rom. 11.34-36.

<sup>35</sup> Ps. 26.12.

<sup>36</sup> Wisd. 5.3,8,9.

<sup>37</sup> Reminiscent in thought of Ps. 102.13: *As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him: for He knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we are dust.*

<sup>38</sup> Matt. 25.35.

<sup>39</sup> James 2.13.

<sup>40</sup> Matt. 5.7.

<sup>41</sup> Luke 6.37,38.

<sup>42</sup> Matt. 7.2.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 23.23.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Matt. 13.52.

<sup>45</sup> Exod. 23.3.

### THIRD DISCOURSE ON PSALM 32

<sup>1</sup> *Ad mensam ejus* (Naples 13); *Ad domum sancti Cypriani quarta feria* (Monte Cassino 57). This sermon was apparently delivered in the basilica at Carthage known as "Mensa Cypriani," which stood on the spot of St. Cyprian's martyrdom; cf. n. 9: *locus iste, quando martyris beati corpus percussus est, lupis plenus erat.*

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 3.19.

<sup>3</sup> See P. Capelle, *op. cit.*, ch. 6, §3. Capelle suggests that *Verbo . . . firmati sunt* was sung by a soloist, and *Sermone . . . solidati sunt* was chanted by the people as a response in a form which preserves an earlier tradition. The translation has retained the Douay rendering of the Vulgate used by Augustine, both in his short *enarratio* and in this sermon, and has adapted the Cyprianic version to suit the text.

<sup>4</sup> See *Enarr. 1 in ps. 32*, n. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 19.23; not verbally exact.

<sup>6</sup> John 8.15; 12.48.

<sup>7</sup> Soph. 2.11.

<sup>8</sup> A probable reference to the Pneumatomachi (that is, "combaters against the Spirit"), a heretical sect supported by the Arians which flourished during the latter half of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century. On the strength of Heb. 1.14 they denied the divinity of the Holy Ghost, declaring Him a ministering angel and a mere creature.

<sup>9</sup> This reference to cosmic harmony, "the music of the spheres," betrays the sometime disciple of Plotinus and the Neoplatonists.

<sup>10</sup> Ps. 119.5.

<sup>11</sup> This would seem to be spoken, not in irony but in true humility; cf. *Serm.* 244.4: "If any among you has a better interpretation, then let him teach me. I am only a teacher in so far as I am receptive of teaching."

<sup>12</sup> Acts 2.4.

<sup>13</sup> Ps. 18.2-5.

<sup>14</sup> Luke 24.46,47.

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 10.16.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 10.19,20.

<sup>17</sup> 2 Tim. 2.12.

<sup>18</sup> St. Cyprian, beheaded on September 14, 258 during the persecution under the Emperors Valerian and Gallienus.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibat in aridam sitientem coelum Dei*, a phrase which the Oxford translator renders thus: "Into a dry land and thirsty went the Heaven of God."

<sup>20</sup> Ps. 111.10.

<sup>21</sup> *Uter*, which Douay translates "vessel," literally means a leather water bottle (cf. Ps. 118.83), and it is this idea which is obviously before the mind of Augustine and his congregation; hence the word is later rendered "wineskin."

<sup>22</sup> Ps. 97.6.

<sup>23</sup> Ps. 2.11.

<sup>24</sup> Rom. 2.11.

<sup>25</sup> John 19.11.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ps. 31. See *Enarr.* 2 in ps. 32, n. 26.

<sup>27</sup> Job 1.11,21.

<sup>28</sup> This may be a reference to the intervention of the imperial law against the Donatists, and if the sermon was delivered after 405 A.D. it may possibly be a graceful tribute to the Emperors Arcadius, Honorius and Theodosius.

<sup>29</sup> Ps. 2.1.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Eph. 1.4: *As He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.*

<sup>31</sup> The psychological principle, *pondus meum amor meus, eo feror quocumque feror*, is at the root of all Augustine's thought. The idea here applied to the individual life is applied with equal force to the social life of a people in *The City of God*. H. Urs von Balthasar indeed considers that the *Enarrationes* are an indispensable adjunct to a study of *The City of God*. *Non faciunt bonos vel malos mores nisi boni vel mali amores*. All men desire happiness, every action of man being directed to that end. The essential difference between men consists in the nature of the happiness desired: either to find it in subordination to the divine order, or to refer all things to self. "Two loves built two cities: the earthly, which is built up by the love of self to the contempt of God, and the heavenly, which is built up by the love of God to the contempt of self" (*De civ. Dei* 14.28).

<sup>32</sup> *In animo*. Cf. W. Langland, *Piers Plowman*:

"While I am quick in the body, quoth He, I am called  
ANIMA;



And when I wish and will ANIMUS is my title. . . .

Augustine and Isidore have each wisely

Enumerated my names and you may choose freely

Now that you know my name, by what name you will call me."

<sup>33</sup> Rom. 12.2.

<sup>34</sup> Deut. 5.21.

<sup>35</sup> Ps. 34.3.

<sup>36</sup> Prov. 3.18. The latter half of this text is evidently from a different version of the Scriptures. Vg.: *et qui tenuerit eam beatus*; Douay: *And he that shall retain her is blessed*. See ACW 2, note 40.

<sup>37</sup> Ps. 15.5.

<sup>38</sup> Isa. 26.13, according to the Septuagint version.

<sup>39</sup> *Colimus eum . . . colit nos*. Augustine is here playing upon the double sense of husbandry and worship.

<sup>40</sup> John 15.1,5.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 1.48.

<sup>42</sup> Ps. 50.11.

<sup>43</sup> Ps. 26.9.

<sup>44</sup> 1 Cor. 12.8,9,29,30.

<sup>45</sup> Ps. 5.2.

<sup>46</sup> *Ad Dominum omnes, in Deo omnes*. A variant reading gives: *Ad Dominum omnis, in Deo omnis spes tua, Deus sit fortitudo tua*, "Everything must tend towards our Lord, in God must you place all your hope, God must be your strength." To render the single word *Dominus* as *our Lord* is according to the ancient Catholic tradition of Hilton, St. John Fisher, St. Thomas More and the Rheims translators. Indeed, Fisher and More go further and translate it as "our good" or "our blessed Lord."

<sup>47</sup> *Mendax equus ad salutem* (Vg., *fallax*; Douay, "vain"). It seems astonishing that Augustine should have felt compelled to explain the difference between *equus* and *aequus*, but quite apart from the ignorance of some of his audience, these sermons were delivered in a tongue which cannot have been the vernacular, since the ordinary language of the people was Punic. On the other hand, *aequus* would make quite good sense—if not exactly good ethics—especially to a rather casual listener. And a pun to point a moral would (alas for the highbrows) be quite in Augustine's style, and a good ruse to command attention.

<sup>48</sup> ἱππος.

<sup>49</sup> Wisd. 1.11.

<sup>50</sup> Ps. 5.7.

<sup>51</sup> *Cogitandum est quid portemus.*

<sup>52</sup> Vg., *sustinet Dominum*; Douay, "waiteth for the Lord."

<sup>53</sup> Matt. 24.13.

<sup>54</sup> That Augustine was no relentless persecutor of heretics is here proved by his wonderful fraternal charity and eloquent plea for forbearance.

<sup>55</sup> Matt. 6.9.

<sup>56</sup> Isa. 66.5, according to the Septuagint.

<sup>57</sup> 1 Cor. 7.15.

<sup>58</sup> Rom. 14.10.

<sup>59</sup> 1 Cor. 6.8.

<sup>60</sup> Luke 15.32.

<sup>61</sup> P. Lapeyre (*op. cit.*) assigns this sermon to the end of September, 403. Augustine had been forced to spend the whole autumn at Carthage on account of the excessive rains, and took the opportunity of launching a series of sermons against the Donatists. He here invites his hearers to assemble next day at the "Basilica Tricliarum" or "Tricillarum," to hear what the Council held on August 25th had done *pro salute ipsorum* (that is, the Donatists). Migne, on the other hand, suggests that the reference is possibly to the famous Council of Carthage of 411. The discourse thus promised has not been preserved.

### FIRST DISCOURSE ON PSALM 33

The internal evidence of the text proves that the two sermons on Psalm 33 were delivered on successive days, and the prefatory note to the first discourse states: *Habitus die sabbati*, but there is no clue as to the year or place of their delivery. *Corpus christianorum* assigns them to Hippo, 395-405. They are striking for two reasons: for the profound doctrine which Augustine did not hesitate to put before the cosmopolitan Carthaginian crowd, and for the amazing and unusual frankness with which he discusses the Holy Eucharist. It is clear from many passages in his sermons that the Blessed Sacrament fell under "the discipline of the secret" whereby this sacred mystery was treated with great reserve in the presence of catechumens and heathens. Both Augustine and Chrysostom frequently stop short in public addresses and content themselves with *quod fideles norunt*: "the faithful will understand." In this discourse, however, Augustine's exposition could not be plainer or more emphatic.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 7.7.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 11.8.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 1 Kings 21.10-22, where the king is called Achis, as Augustine later points out. The Vulgate terms him Achimelech, but the Septuagint and Old Latin read more correctly Abimelech. Possibly, as Boylan suggests (*op. cit.*), Abimelech was a general Hebrew designation for foreign kings.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 3.1.

<sup>5</sup> *Regnorum libri*, the Septuagint title of the Books of Kings.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Kings 15.14.

<sup>7</sup> *Et ferebatur in manibus suis*. In this whole passage (1 Kings 21.12,13,14) Augustine's version differs considerably from the Vulgate, and the phrase *he was carried in his own hands*, upon which the present sublime sermon depends, is altogether absent. Vg. reads *et collabebatur inter manus eorum*, "he slipt down between their hands."

<sup>8</sup> 1 Kings 17; 18; 19; 21.10-15; 22.1.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. 10.11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 10.1-4.

<sup>11</sup> Gal. 4.24.

<sup>12</sup> Ps. 109.4.

<sup>13</sup> Gen. 14.18; cf. Heb. 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Voluit esse salutem nostram*. In translating from the Vulgate into English, St. Thomas More set the precedent of rendering a single Latin word by two English ones, and it is from him that the present translation of *health and salvation* to express the Latin *salus* has been borrowed.

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 26.26.

<sup>16</sup> John 1.1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 1.14.

<sup>18</sup> Ps. 77.24,25.

<sup>19</sup> Phil. 2.6-8.

<sup>20</sup> Luke 1.32.

<sup>21</sup> Matt. 22.42-46.

<sup>22</sup> Heb. 7.11.

<sup>23</sup> Rom. 9.27.

<sup>24</sup> 2 Cor. 3.6.

<sup>25</sup> John 6.54,56.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 53.

<sup>27</sup> Rom. 1.31.

<sup>28</sup> Phil. 2.6,8.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Venerable Bede: *Tympanum quippe est pellis in ligno*

*extenta. Pellis vero in ligno extenta, caro est nostra, ad exemplum dominicae crucis afflicta* (*Comm. in Luc.* 5.78).

<sup>30</sup> John 10.15.

<sup>31</sup> Matt. 26.26.

<sup>32</sup> *Illud corpus*: the Benedictine editors note that all their MSS. omit the word *corpus*, which stands however in the Oxford MS.

<sup>33</sup> Cant. 4.8, according to the Septuagint.

<sup>34</sup> 1 John 3.2.

<sup>35</sup> 1 Cor. 13.12.

## SECOND DISCOURSE ON PSALM 33

<sup>1</sup> The prefatory note to the discourse runs: *Habitus die dominico*.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 13.8. Cf. St. John Chrysostom: "He says that this is a debt also, not however such as the tribute or the custom, but a continuous one. For he does not wish it ever to be paid off, or rather he would have it always rendered, yet never fully so, but to be always owing. For this is the character of the debt, that one keeps giving and constantly owing" (*In Rom. hom.* 23).

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings 21.13. It is disconcerting to find Augustine here quoting a different text on Sunday from that quoted on Saturday. We learn from his own pen (*Ep.* 71.6): *in diversis codicibus ita diversa est, ut tolerari vix possit*. See Dom de Bruyne, "Saint Augustin reviseur de la Bible," in *Miscellanea Agostiniana* 2 (Rome 1931) 521-608.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 26.26.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. 1.22-25.

<sup>6</sup> Job 1.21.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 21.9.

<sup>8</sup> Ps. 31.9.

<sup>9</sup> John 19.32,33.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 10.18.

<sup>11</sup> *Inquisivi*, "search into"; Vg., *exquisivi*, "search out."

<sup>12</sup> Matt. 6.6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 5.8.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Cor. 15.54.

<sup>15</sup> Isa. 65.24; 58.9.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor 15.54.

<sup>17</sup> Matt. 22.30.

<sup>18</sup> John 16.22.



<sup>19</sup> *Non erubescant; Vg., non confundentur.*

<sup>20</sup> John 1.9.

<sup>21</sup> Calvin and the Reformers of the sixteenth century in their attack on the sacrament of penance attributed its origin to the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Augustine would seem to refer here to some form of public penance. This was commonly prescribed and performed in the early Church but did not necessarily involve a public avowal of sin. It lay with the confessor to determine how far the penitent should go beyond sacramental confession; cf. St. Augustine, *Serm.* 151.3. In North Africa the details legislating public penance were embodied in documents to which St. Cyprian refers, but which have not been preserved. The monastic disciplinary code which St. Benedict formulated in his Rule retains many of the public penitential practices of the early Church, such as excommunication, prostrations and public petitions for prayer.

<sup>22</sup> *Inops; Vg., pauper.*

<sup>23</sup> P. Capelle remarks that Augustine's very rare comments upon variations in different codices are never made for the sake of textual criticism but solely to clarify thought. The text *angelum Dominus* to which Augustine here refers is to be found in the sixth-century psalter preserved at Verona.

<sup>24</sup> Isa. 9.6, according to the Septuagint.

<sup>25</sup> *Gustate et videte quam suavis est Dominus (Vg., quoniam).* Elsewhere he uses the Cyprianic form *dulcis est*.

<sup>26</sup> John 6.53,54.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 6.41.

<sup>28</sup> Matt. 5.6.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 11.15.

<sup>30</sup> 4 Kings 6.26-30.

<sup>31</sup> Gen. 12.10; 26.1.

<sup>32</sup> 2 Cor. 11.27.

<sup>33</sup> Acts 15.39. We might add "and even between Jerome and Augustine."

<sup>34</sup> Ps. 42.5.

<sup>35</sup> John 16.33; last sentence slightly altered.

<sup>36</sup> Dan. 3.49.

<sup>37</sup> 2 Mach. 6.3.

<sup>38</sup> *Qui obtriverunt cor (Vg., tribulato sunt corde) . . . salvos faciet* (usual in Augustine in place of Vg. *salvabit*).

<sup>39</sup> This verse is also dealt with in *Enarr. 1 in ps. 34*, n. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Exod. 12.46; cf. John 19.36.

<sup>41</sup> John 19.33 ff.

<sup>42</sup> Luke 23.43.

<sup>43</sup> John 19.32.

<sup>44</sup> Luke 16.19-25.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. on this subject Augustine's *Serm.* 102.

<sup>46</sup> Rom. 4.5.

<sup>47</sup> 1 John 2.2.

## FIRST DISCOURSE ON PSALM 34

<sup>1</sup> *Apud Thagaste* (MSS. Monte Cassino 57; Vienna 659). The two sermons on this Psalm are the only examples we have of discourses delivered by Augustine in his native town. From the opening words it would seem as if the bishops were assembled in council, and it was Augustine's lifelong lament that he was never allowed to play the role of listener when there was question of a sermon to be preached. They are assigned to the summer of 414 by the *Corpus christianorum* editors.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 7.14.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 9.4.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 8.31.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. 5.13.

<sup>6</sup> Eph. 6.16,17.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Thess. 5.8.

<sup>8</sup> *Dei autem quae?*: an emendation by the editors. The MSS. read: *Haec arma nostra sunt Dei, quod legimus. . . .*

<sup>9</sup> Ps. 16.13.

<sup>10</sup> See *Enarr.* 1 in ps. 32, n. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Ps. 43.23.

<sup>12</sup> Matt. 8.24.

<sup>13</sup> Eph. 6.12.

<sup>14</sup> Migne points out that *haec fabrica quam videmus* is missing from all the MSS. Augustine is again refuting the Gnostic and Manichaeian theories that the material world is evil and ruled by the devil in opposition to God.

<sup>15</sup> John 1.10.

<sup>16</sup> 1 John 5.19.

<sup>17</sup> John 1.5.

<sup>18</sup> Eph. 5.8.

<sup>19</sup> Titus 2.8.

<sup>20</sup> Ps. 3.2,3.

<sup>21</sup> Ps. 141.5. Douay: *And there is no one that hath regard to my soul.*

<sup>22</sup> Ps. 21.17,19.

<sup>23</sup> Ps. 120.1,2.

<sup>24</sup> One is here inevitably reminded of St. Teresa of Avila's "Let us not look for luxuries, daughters: we are well enough off here—it is only one night in a bad inn—thank God" (*Way of Perfection* 40.8).

<sup>25</sup> Exod. 23.25-31.

<sup>26</sup> Job 1.11.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 2.10.

<sup>28</sup> Matt. 5.44.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 16.22,23.

<sup>30</sup> Ps. 1.4.

<sup>31</sup> This accords with St. Thomas Aquinas' treatment of the effects of original sin; cf. *Sum. theol.* 1-2, q. 85, a. 3: "In so far as the reason is deprived of its order to the true, there is the wound of ignorance; . . . and in so far as the concupiscible is deprived of its order to the delectable, moderated by reason, there is the wound of concupiscence."

<sup>32</sup> *Muscipulae suae corruptionem*, where Vg. reads *interitum laquei sui*.

<sup>33</sup> To ask constant questions is part of Augustine's method in preaching, in order to secure what he considered to be his main object, namely "intelligent, pleasurable and submissive attention" (*De doctrina christiana* 4.57).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Prov. 5.22: *He is fast bound with the ropes of his own sins.*

<sup>35</sup> Ps. 51.4.

<sup>36</sup> Matt. 7.7.

<sup>37</sup> Ps. 72.26.

<sup>38</sup> Ps. 15.5,2.

<sup>39</sup> *Salutare Dei Christus est*. St. John Fisher, in his *Treatise on the Seven Penytencyall Psalmes* (1508), constantly translates the Latin *salutare* as "our Saviour"; cf. "After our Saviour Jesus Christ (Which our Prophet calleth oftentimes *Salutare*) ascended into Heaven, they were very sad and sorry. . . ."

<sup>40</sup> Luke 2.30.

<sup>41</sup> Ps. 118.85. Vg., *fabulationes*; Douay, *fables*.

<sup>42</sup> Ps. 113.5,6.

<sup>43</sup> Ps. 33.21.

<sup>44</sup> Rom. 1.17.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 4.5.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 10.10.

<sup>47</sup> Luke 23.43.

<sup>48</sup> John 19.33.

<sup>49</sup> Ps. 33.21.

<sup>50</sup> *Liget tibi*. Variant readings give *liget te*, *nocet tibi*, *neget tibi*.

<sup>51</sup> Matt. 12.29.

<sup>52</sup> Ps. 71.12.

<sup>53</sup> Ps. 18.15.

## SECOND DISCOURSE ON PSALM 34

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 2.24; Eph. 5.31.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 23.33.

<sup>3</sup> *Ita dicitur Deus nescire, quomodo ars non novit vitia*. St. Augustine's use of the word *ars* in this passage, and in that slightly later where he puts into our Lord's mouth the phrase: *Ego autem ars ipsa sum quae non habet vitium*, is the despair of any translator. He applies the metaphor of human craftsmanship to God's perfect knowledge of His creatures coupled with His refusal to recognize those who mortally offend Him. A parallel passage is to be found in *De verbis Domini serm.* 93, on the parable of the ten virgins: *Quid ergo est: Non novi vos? Improbo vos, reprobo vos. In arte mea non vos agnosco; ars mea nescit vitia, et judicat vitia; nescit faciendo, judicat arguendo; sic ergo non novi vos*.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 7.23.

<sup>5</sup> *Vitia estis*. The Benedictine editors suggest emending the phrase to *vitiis haesistis*, "you have persisted in ill-doing," but that would spoil the metaphor.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 26.65.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 21.19.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. 2.21,22.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. 12.27.

<sup>10</sup> Matt. 6.6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 4.1.

<sup>12</sup> Rom. 8.3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 5.12.

<sup>14</sup> *Massa*, "lump"; cf. Rom. 11.16.

<sup>15</sup> There are various readings of this passage. According to two MSS, "of Adam" is supplied at the end of the first clause, which then runs: "Mary, sprung from Adam, died as the result of



Adam's sin"; another reading has: "Mary is sprung from Adam; Adam died as a result of sin"; a third reading: "Mary sprang from the first Adam; the Second Adam sprang from Mary to destroy sin." Augustine's statement here is not, as would perhaps appears at first sight, in opposition to his teaching elsewhere on our Lady's sinlessness (cf. *De natura et gratia* 36). He is merely propounding an obvious truth. Had Adam not sinned, there would have been no death for any man. He does not say that our Lady died on account of any sin of her own, whereas his words indubitably imply that death was the direct penalty of Adam's personal transgression. This passage only teaches what most Catholic theologians hold, that our Lady was included by nature in the sin of Adam, as the moral head of the human race. It required therefore a positive act of God's will and omnipotence to exclude her from the category of our fallen nature, whereas our Lord by nature was absolutely free from all stain of original sin. Hence it is that the papal definition of the Immaculate Conception declares that our Lady "was preserved untouched by any taint of original guilt, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in consideration of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind." In considering St. Augustine's recorded words on the subject of our Lady's immunity from sin, it must be remembered that he was probably unwilling to discuss the question of her exemption from Adam's sin because of the bad use the Pelagians would make of such an admission to further their own heretical tenets.—On the interpretation of the present text, cf. T. Gallus, "Ad testimonium 'explicitum' s. Augustini de morte b. Virginis," *Divus Thomas* (Piacenza) 30 (1953) 265-69, and the demurrer to evidence interposed by W. J. Burghardt, *The Testimony of the Patristic Age concerning Mary's Death* (Westminster, Md. 1957) 45-46.

<sup>16</sup> John 18.4,6.

<sup>17</sup> Mark 11.13.

<sup>18</sup> John 4.7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 19.28.

<sup>20</sup> Luke 24.18-21.

<sup>21</sup> Dan. 13.35,44.

<sup>22</sup> Ps. 21.2; Matt. 27.46.

<sup>23</sup> Matt. 14.23; Luke 6.12.

<sup>24</sup> 2 Cor. 5.19.

<sup>25</sup> John 14.10.

<sup>26</sup> The constant references to contemplative prayer throughout Augustine's *Enarrationes*, coming as they do from him whom

Dom Cuthbert Butler terms the prince of mystics and the greatest religious genius in Western Christianity, are of great interest and value. For a full study of the subject, see Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism*.

<sup>27</sup> Acts 17.28.

<sup>28</sup> Matt. 16.16,17,22,23.

<sup>29</sup> Ps. 30.23.

<sup>30</sup> Matt. 5.5.

<sup>31</sup> Vg., *ignoravi*, "I knew not."

<sup>32</sup> The first part of this verse is omitted here but is treated of in *Enarr. in ps.* 57, n. 20.

<sup>33</sup> The last general persecution of the Church came to an end with the death of Julian the Apostate in 363, when St. Augustine was but a child of nine years. The reference here is probably to the local persecution of Catholics by Donatists, especially to the terrible atrocities committed by the roving bands of fanatical Circumcellions.

<sup>34</sup> *Astutiis*; Vg., *malignitate*, "malice."

<sup>35</sup> Luke 18.3.

<sup>36</sup> Isa. 52.5; Rom. 2.24.

<sup>37</sup> 2 Cor. 10.12: *For we dare not match or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but we measure ourselves by ourselves, and compare ourselves with ourselves.*

<sup>38</sup> *Insultant*; Vg., *supergaudeant*, "rejoice."

<sup>39</sup> *Pacificæ*. Some MSS. have *pacifica*; the commentary supposes the latter reading.

<sup>40</sup> Matt. 22.16-18.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 26.68.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 27.42.

<sup>43</sup> John 19.7.

<sup>44</sup> Migne here reads *sapientiam*, "wisdom," whereas the Maurists read *patientiam*.

<sup>45</sup> Isa. 42.14.

<sup>46</sup> Ps. 49.21.

<sup>47</sup> Matt. 28.20.

<sup>48</sup> A well-known dictum frequently quoted in controversy.

<sup>49</sup> Matt. 5.10.

<sup>50</sup> Ps. 100.5.

<sup>51</sup> *My justice*; Vg., *justitiam tuam*, "thy justice."

<sup>52</sup> Ps. 123.1,3.

<sup>53</sup> Acts 10.13.

<sup>54</sup> Exod. 32.20.

<sup>55</sup> *Maligna; Vg., magna.*

<sup>56</sup> Some MSS. read: *Innocentia operum tuorum praeeparat te*, "The integrity of your actions prepares you."

### DISCOURSE ON PSALM 35

<sup>1</sup> There is no indication as to the occasion or place of the delivery of this sermon. The note which prefaces the text simply runs: *Sermo habitus forte die sabbati*. The *Corpus christianorum* assigns it to Hippo, Lent 412.

<sup>2</sup> Wisd. 9.15.

<sup>3</sup> John 1.1.

<sup>4</sup> Tob. 4.16; not quoted literally.

<sup>5</sup> Douay: *That his iniquity may be found unto hatred.*

<sup>6</sup> Ps. 24.7.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Mal. 2.17: *You have wearied the Lord with your words . . . in that you say: Every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and such please him; or surely where is the God of judgment?*

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Conf.* 8.7: "You were setting me face to face with myself, forcing me upon my own sight, that I might see my iniquity and loathe it. I had known it, but I had pretended not to see it, had deliberately looked the other way and let it go from my mind."

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 6.6.

<sup>10</sup> Isa. 64.4; 1 Cor. 2.9.

<sup>11</sup> Matt. 25.34.

<sup>12</sup> Wisd. 5.3.

<sup>13</sup> Matt. 25.41.

<sup>14</sup> Ps. 111.7.

<sup>15</sup> Eph. 3.20.

<sup>16</sup> Ps. 1.1.

<sup>17</sup> Rom. 6.12.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Cor. 15.53.

<sup>19</sup> Rom. 7.25.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 7.23-25.

<sup>21</sup> Ps. 32.5.

<sup>22</sup> Matt. 5.45.

<sup>23</sup> We gather from the text of Augustine's sermon here and in n. 17 that the Lesson at Mass on this particular day was drawn from Isa. 5, and the Gospel from John 8. Possibly Ps. 35 provided the text for Introit and Gradual. The Gospel, John 8.45-49, which

includes this passage, is read in the Roman Missal on Passion Sunday. Isa. 5 does not now occur as a lesson, but parts of vv. 1-2 and v. 7 form one of the canticles for the Easter Vigil.

<sup>24</sup> Vg., *labruscas*, "wild grapes."

<sup>25</sup> Isa. 5.4,6,7.

<sup>26</sup> Acts 13.46.

<sup>27</sup> Ps. 120.1,2.

<sup>28</sup> See *Enarr.* 2 in ps. 36. Maximian, a Donatist deacon, had been consecrated Bishop of Carthage in opposition to Primian, the already existing Donatist bishop of that see, and so became the leader of the Maximianists who seceded from the parent stem. No fewer than three hundred and ten Donatist bishops attended the Council of Bagai in 394, which drew up a decree of excommunication against the rebels. Augustine treats the whole matter fully in his second sermon on the Psalm following.

<sup>29</sup> Ps. 10.2.

<sup>30</sup> Jer. 17.5.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Cor. 3.4.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 1.13.

<sup>33</sup> John 1.27; Mark 1.7.

<sup>34</sup> John 3.29.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 1. 16,9.

<sup>36</sup> 1 Cor. 4.1.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 3.6,7.

<sup>38</sup> Rom. 1.21,22,24.

<sup>39</sup> *Latine dicam*, a puzzling phrase which seems to suggest that up to this point the preacher had been speaking in a language other than Latin. But possibly, as the translation suggests, it may merely be the equivalent of our expression, "to put it in plain English."

<sup>40</sup> Prov. 18.3.

<sup>41</sup> *Sicut multiplicata est misericordia tua. Vg., quemadmodum multiplicasti misericordiam tuam*; Douay, "O how hast thou multiplied thy mercy."

<sup>42</sup> Ps. 8.5.

<sup>43</sup> 1 Cor. 15.22.

<sup>44</sup> Matt. 8.20.

<sup>45</sup> Gal. 3.23.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *King Lear*, Act 5, Scene 3:

"The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices  
Make instruments to scourge us."



<sup>47</sup> A reminiscence of Ps. 115.2: *I said in my excess: Every man is a liar.*

<sup>48</sup> 1 Cor. 13.12. Douay: *through a glass in a dark manner. . . . Now I know in part. . . .*

<sup>49</sup> Ps. 22.5.

<sup>50</sup> Ps. 115.12,13.

<sup>51</sup> Matt. 5.6.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 5.8.

<sup>53</sup> Ps. 33.2.

<sup>54</sup> Isa. 14.13. Douay: *I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north.*

<sup>55</sup> Gen. 3.5.

<sup>56</sup> John 1.14.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 8.48.

<sup>58</sup> Ps. 18.13,14: *Who can understand sins? From my secret ones cleanse me. . . .*

<sup>59</sup> Rom. 1.21,24,28.

<sup>60</sup> Gen. 3.15. Vg., *Ipsa conteret caput tuum, et tu insidiaberis calcaneo ejus.* Douay, *She shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.*

<sup>61</sup> Eccle. 10.15.

#### FIRST DISCOURSE ON PSALM 36

<sup>1</sup> The date of the three Discourses on this Psalm has been much disputed. Wundt proposes 401; Zepf defends the traditional 403; Capelle considers it should be placed after the Council of Carthage of 411 which dealt the deathblow to Donatism. We owe these wonderful sermons, all of which were delivered at Carthage, to the torrential rains that fell and impeded Augustine's plans, as he tells us in the Second Discourse: *Voluit Dominus propter imbrium nimietatem retardare profectionem nostram; et imperatum est nobis, ne vacaret hic erga vos lingua nostra.* St. Fulgentius of Ruspe (468-533), one of the principal theologians of the sixth century, has related (*Vita* 3.19) how the first of these three sermons moved him to embrace the monastic life. *Corpus christianorum* dates these sermons as Sun., Oct. 25, Nov. 1, and Nov. 8, 403, but says they were delivered at Hippo, which cannot be correct.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 13.32.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 22.12.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 15.4.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 22.33.

<sup>6</sup> Deut. 13.3.

<sup>7</sup> John 16.12.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. 3.1,2.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 24.40.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. 3.9.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 3.6,10.

<sup>12</sup> Luke 16.9.

<sup>13</sup> Matt. 25.35,42.

<sup>14</sup> A healthy piece of plain speaking.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Thess. 1.6.

<sup>16</sup> Col. 3.3,4.

<sup>17</sup> *Olera prati*; Augustine is here using the African text (non-Afr., *herbae*; Vg., *olera herbarum*).

<sup>18</sup> John 15.1.

<sup>19</sup> Ps. 72.26.

<sup>20</sup> Ps. 15.5.

<sup>21</sup> See *Enarr.* 2 in *ps.* 32, nn. 17-18, preached at Carthage in the Basilica of St. Cyprian.

<sup>22</sup> Ps. 72.26.

<sup>23</sup> Matt. 5.8.

<sup>24</sup> Gal. 5.17.

<sup>25</sup> Rom. 7.24,25.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 1.17.

<sup>27</sup> Col. 3.4.

<sup>28</sup> Matt. 24.13.

<sup>29</sup> Luke 18.1.

<sup>30</sup> Matt. 20.8.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 7.13,14.

<sup>32</sup> Ps. 6.8.

<sup>33</sup> John 13.16.

<sup>34</sup> Matt. 25.34.

<sup>35</sup> This passage of Augustine calls for comment, since superficially it would seem to suggest that he is postponing the beatific vision until after the General Judgment, as later some Eastern heretics and Protestants—notably the Anabaptists and Socinians—postponed it. Even within the Church a controversy raged under Pope John XXII in 1333, when certain theologians among the Friars Minor maintained that the souls of the just in heaven were admitted at death not to the vision of God, but to the enjoyment of Christ in His humanity. Pope Benedict XII, however, has de-

finied *de fide* that souls after death enter immediately, if perfect, into the beatific vision: "Homines pios plene purgatos vel justos ex hac vita decedentes statim assequi beatitudinem et visione Dei beatifica perfrui" (Constitution *Benedictus Deus*, 1336).

It is interesting to note that St. Thomas Aquinas discusses this very passage of Augustine as follows (*Sum. theol., Supplementum* 20, q. 69. art. 2):

OBJECTION 1. It would seem that no souls are conveyed to heaven or hell immediately after death. For a gloss on Ps. 36.10, *Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be*, says that *the saints are delivered at the end of life; yet after this life they will not yet be where the saints will be when it is said to them: Come, ye blessed of my Father.*

REPLY TO OBJ. 1. The gloss explains itself: for it expounds the words, *They will not yet be where the saints will be*, etc., by saying immediately afterwards: *That is to say, they will not have the double stole which the saints will have at the resurrection.*

(The "gloss" to which St. Thomas refers is probably the famous compilation of composite authorship called simply *Glosa* by twelfth- and thirteenth-century masters, which consisted of a representative selection of extracts from Fathers and masters from the third century to the early twelfth. For a full discussion of the biblical gloss see Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* [Oxford 1941]).

"The reason," St. Thomas continues, "why a distinction is drawn between the time before and the time after the resurrection is because before the resurrection they are there without the body whereas afterwards they are with the body." He finally quotes Gregory the Great (*Dial.* 4): "If, then, the souls of the just are in heaven now, what will they receive in reward for their justice on the Judgment Day? Surely it will be a gain to them at the judgment that whereas now they enjoy only the happiness of the soul, afterwards they will enjoy also that of the body, so as to rejoice also in the flesh wherein they bore sorrow and torments for the Lord." Cf. also St. Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 11: *Haec amoris perfectio non competit etiam solutis animabus beatorum ante resurrectionem.*

<sup>36</sup> Luke 16.23.

<sup>37</sup> Matt. 25.41.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 8.12.

## SECOND DISCOURSE ON PSALM 36

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to recapture from the printed word the extraordinary effect this sermon must have had upon its hearers. As M. Paul Monceaux has observed (*Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne*), the main originality of St. Augustine's polemics lay in publicly offering the irrefutable proof of actual documents relating to the question in dispute. He here openly reveals an important letter, a copy of which he had somehow managed to obtain, in which the Maximianist synod of Cabarsussi notified "the whole of Africa" of the deposition of Primian, Donatist Primate of Carthage. By his succinct commentary upon the text of the letter, Augustine proves conclusively that the Donatists had been forced by the Maximianist secession to recognize the very principles among themselves which had prompted the Catholic Church's action against them in the case of Caecilian, namely, that the decisions of a local council may be revised and even reversed by a later and larger council, and that a minority cannot overrule the whole body by a prior decision.

Primian's reaction to Augustine's revelation was immediate. He launched a furious attack upon his beliefs and morals, accusing him of debauchery, sacrilege and idolatry, maintaining that he had never received baptism and was still a Manichee, if not a pagan. Augustine's reply, bearing in every line the imprint of a saint, concludes Sermon 3 on this Psalm. As the opening words of this Second Sermon prove, Augustine delivered it in Carthage at the request of his friend Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage.

Migne omits the sentences in parenthesis from n. 19 onwards; in observing them the translation follows the Benedictine text, as followed by *Corpus christianorum*.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 5.44.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 12.21.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 16.27.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 2.5.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 1 and 9.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 10.28.

<sup>8</sup> Ps. 26.14.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Acts 9.13-16.

<sup>10</sup> Rom. 5.3-5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 8.35.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor. 4.15.

<sup>13</sup> 2 Cor. 12.15.



<sup>14</sup> Acts 21.11-13.

<sup>15</sup> Vg. reads *dies*, "days."

<sup>16</sup> Ps. 24.9.

<sup>17</sup> Luke 16.20.

<sup>18</sup> 1 John 3.2.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor. 13.12.

<sup>20</sup> Ps. 30.20.

<sup>21</sup> Rom. 8.18.

<sup>22</sup> Ps. 115.12,13.

<sup>23</sup> Matt. 20.22.

<sup>24</sup> John 21.17.

<sup>25</sup> Jer. 17.5.

<sup>26</sup> Ps. 115.11.

<sup>27</sup> Some MSS. read *fallere non potest*, "cannot deceive."

<sup>28</sup> Rom. 5.3-5.

<sup>29</sup> Job 1.21.

<sup>30</sup> I. e., in lay communion.

<sup>31</sup> Prov. 6.6; 30.25.

<sup>32</sup> 2 Tim. 3.8,9.

<sup>33</sup> Matt. 4.19.

<sup>34</sup> 1 Cor. 1.27; Douay: *that He may confound the wise.*

<sup>35</sup> Ps. 141.6.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. the *Exsultet* of Holy Saturday: *Nihil enim nobis nasci profuit, nisi redimi profuisset.*

<sup>37</sup> Rom. 8.17.

<sup>38</sup> No matter how sublime the doctrine he is laying before them, Augustine never loses sight of his audience, and he suddenly, as here, illuminates and illustrates his theme by a most homely example taken from the daily life around him.

<sup>39</sup> Vg. reads: *Cum ceciderit, non collidetur: quia Dominus superponit manum suam*; Douay: *When he shall fall he shall not be bruised, for the Lord putteth His hand under him.*

<sup>40</sup> Matt. 27.26.

<sup>41</sup> John 8.48.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 9.22.

<sup>43</sup> Matt. 26.60.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 28.13.

<sup>45</sup> A similar passage, *Enarr. in ps. 63*, n. 15, occurs in the lessons of *Tenebrae* for Holy Saturday.

<sup>46</sup> Namely, the Donatists. From this point onwards, Augustine confines himself to an exposure of events at the recent Donatist Council.

<sup>47</sup> Traditor was the name given to those accused of having surrendered copies of the Bible during the Diocletian persecution. That Caecilian or Felix of Aptonga, his consecrator, had been a traditor formed the grounds for the Donatist rejection of Caecilian as lawful bishop of Carthage.

<sup>48</sup> The Circumcellions were bands of fanatical terrorists often commanded by a priest, or even by a bishop such as Optatus of Thamugadi, employed by the Donatist bishops to compel assent to their heresy by outrage and murder. Augustine himself on one occasion narrowly escaped their hands.

<sup>49</sup> The Benedictine editors, quoted by Migne, supply this note: It is clear from this passage that Augustine has undertaken a refutation of that mandate of Primian referred to in *Brev. collat. cum Donat. die 3. c. 8*, and at greater length in Book 4 *Contra Cresconium* 47 where he says: "Why then did Primian in the *Acta* of the governing body of Carthage, among other things to our discredit, commission an investigation? 'They steal others' property,' said he, 'and we let go what is taken from us.'"

<sup>50</sup> So said Rogatian and Pontius in the name of the Donatists; cf. *Ep. 105 ad Donatistas*, and *Contra Petilianum* 2.92,97.

<sup>51</sup> Eight MSS. read: *Qui dicis, Qualis tu, tales et caeteri*, "You who say: 'As each is, so are all.'"

<sup>52</sup> The Maximianists had seceded from the main body of Donatists; the treatment meted out to them by the Donatists afforded the best disproof of the claims of the schismatics.

<sup>53</sup> I. e., the Maximianists.

<sup>54</sup> Primian, who became Donatist bishop of Carthage in 391, presided over the Donatist party at the famous Conference of 411.

<sup>55</sup> With never-failing patience and charity, Augustine appeals for a consideration of facts. Far from desiring a cheap victory in controversy, his consistent aim is the reunion of Christendom in Africa.

<sup>56</sup> A reference to the suit brought before Zenophilus the Consul in 320, referred to in *Contra Cresconium* 3.29, during which the evidence proved that Lucilla had procured the election of Majorinus in opposition to Caecilian by means of bribery. According to St. Optatus of Milevis, the first historian of the schism, Donatism owed its birth "to a woman's anger." Having been reproved by Caecilian for certain devotions which amounted to superstition, she avenged herself by fostering intrigue and schism, bribing the clergy to disregard Caecilian and declare his election invalid.

<sup>57</sup> At this point Augustine reads aloud the Maximianist letter of the Council of Cabarsussi, interspersing the text with comments of his own. The reader may easily distinguish the two from the different type employed.

<sup>58</sup> Cabarsussi or Cabaroussi, but some MSS. read *Cavernas Susis*. The Maurists note that some, following Baronius, conjecture that this letter is to be assigned to a council of Maximianists held at Carthage which preceded the famous Council of Cabarsussi; and they presume that *Cavernae Susis* must be a spot located near Carthage. But as Augustine points out (*Contra Cresconium* 4.6,7), the early Council at Carthage consisted of forty-three bishops only and was not strong enough to issue a formal condemnation, whereas a hundred or more were present at Cabarsussi and the deposition and excommunication were formal and complete, as is evident from the text of the letter he quotes.

<sup>59</sup> Exod. 23.7. Vg. reads *quia aversor impium*; Douay, *because I abhor the wicked*.

<sup>60</sup> A reference to 1 Kings 2.25: *If one man shall sin against another, God may be appeased in his behalf: but if a man shall sin against the Lord, who shall pray for him?*

<sup>61</sup> Matt. 6.12.

<sup>62</sup> 1 John 2.1,2.

<sup>63</sup> 1 Tim. 2.5.

<sup>64</sup> *Universum chorum*.

<sup>65</sup> Claudius was one of the Donatist bishops in Rome who attended the synod held there in 374. The many subdivisions of the Donatists, such as the Claudianists, the Urbanists, the Rogatists and the Maximianists, make complicated reading.

<sup>66</sup> 1 Cor. 6.1.

<sup>67</sup> 2 Thess. 3.6.

<sup>68</sup> Salvius, Bishop of Membresa, was one of Maximian's consecrators. He was twice ordered to give place to the Primianist, Restitutus, and upon his refusal a hired mob flogged the aged man and compelled him to dance with dead dogs tied round his neck. His people, however, were devoted to him and forthwith built him a new church, whereupon this tiny African town became possessed of three bishops, a Maximianist, a Primianist and a Catholic.

<sup>69</sup> One of Augustine's most powerful and practical arguments was the inconsistency of the Donatists with their avowed principles. Thus, while theoretically insisting upon the rebaptism of schismatics, they made themselves ridiculous by allowing that if

a bishop returned, he and his whole flock were to be admitted unconditionally. This they conceded, as Augustine was quick to point out, even in the case of two of Maximian's consecrators, Praetextatus of Assur and Felician of Musti, in spite of the fact that a Donatist bishop, Rogatus, had already been appointed at Assur.

<sup>70</sup> The Donatist Council of Bagai held in 394 had anathematized the Maximianists for their schism from the main body.

<sup>71</sup> To their position as Donatists with regard to the Catholic Church, and as Primianists with regard to Maximianists.

<sup>72</sup> Augustine presses his point home with ruthless logic: the majority gained by Primianists over Maximianists was as nothing compared to the Church Universal over Donatist Africa.

<sup>73</sup> Catholics were given no quarter. Wherever Donatists gained the upper hand, they insisted upon rebaptizing Catholics who yielded to them, or reordaining them if clerics. The churches torn from Catholics were purified, and the Blessed Sacrament thrown to dogs.

<sup>74</sup> Apoc. 1.4. Augustine frequently appealed to the Eastern Church, especially to those apostolic churches to which the Epistles of St. Peter, St. Paul and St. John were addressed, as not being in communion with the Donatists in Africa.

### THIRD DISCOURSE ON PSALM 36

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 12.10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 26.1.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. 11.27.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Isa. 58.7.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. 4.16.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 5.18-22.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. 12.27; Eph. 4.15.

<sup>8</sup> Col. 1.18,24.

<sup>9</sup> Ps. 91.15.

<sup>10</sup> Matt. 4.3,4.

<sup>11</sup> Ps. 1.2.

<sup>12</sup> Lev. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Prov. 21.20, according to the Septuagint.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 2.11.

<sup>15</sup> As P. Capelle points out, *generat* would seem, at first glance,



to have been coined by Augustine, but unfortunately for the critics who have drawn false conclusions from such an assumption, the word is found twice in Cyprian, and also in Ambrose and Jerome; cf. *op. cit.* 140, note 2.

<sup>16</sup> Augustine had learnt the lesson he neglected in his youth. Cf. *Conf.* 1.18: "Behold, O Lord my God, . . . with what anxious care the sons of men observe the rules of letters and syllables taught by the speakers of our tongue before us, while they neglect the eternal rules of everlasting salvation taught by you."

<sup>17</sup> Latin: *quam in nostra desertitudine vos deserti eritis*—an untranslatable pun.

<sup>18</sup> Ps. 14.5.

<sup>19</sup> Prov. 19.17.

<sup>20</sup> Matt. 25.34-46.

<sup>21</sup> Gal. 6.9,10.

<sup>22</sup> 2 Cor. 9.6.

<sup>23</sup> Ps. 125.6,7.

<sup>24</sup> Fr. Hugh Pope has observed (*op. cit.*, p. 149) that preaching to the Africans of Carthage can have been no humdrum affair, since they were not slow to express their sentiments either by applause or by shouts of disapproval.

<sup>25</sup> Luke 12.33.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Col. 3.3,4: *For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory.*

<sup>27</sup> Heb. 12.6.

<sup>28</sup> Dan. 3.50.

<sup>29</sup> 2 Mac. 7.7.

<sup>30</sup> Wisd. 5.8.

<sup>31</sup> Ps. 141.6.

<sup>32</sup> Matt. 24.35.

<sup>33</sup> Isa. 29.13.

<sup>34</sup> Ps. 120.4.

<sup>35</sup> Wisd. 2.15.

<sup>36</sup> Job 9.24.

<sup>37</sup> Ps. 139.9.

<sup>38</sup> Jer. 17.16.

<sup>39</sup> Matt. 10.28,30.

<sup>40</sup> 2 Cor. 5.10.

<sup>41</sup> It would seem, from this reference, as if this sermon was probably delivered at Carthage in one of the two major basilicas

dedicated to St. Cyprian. See Second Discourse on Psalm 32, note 1.

<sup>42</sup> Matt. 25.34.

<sup>43</sup> Gen. 19.26.

<sup>44</sup> Ps. 72.17.

<sup>45</sup> *Directionem*. Vg. reads *aequitatem*; Douay, *justice*.

<sup>46</sup> John 11.25.

<sup>47</sup> Matt. 5.9.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 13.24 ff.

<sup>49</sup> 2 Cor. 12.11.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Titus 3.3.

<sup>51</sup> Primian.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Conf.* 3. One can only try to imagine the feelings of his audience as they listened to the humble self-accusation of one of the most famous orators and rhetoricians Carthage had ever produced.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Cor. 4.3.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Conf.* 9.6: "When the time had come to give in my name for baptism, we left the country and returned to Milan."

<sup>55</sup> Ps. 49.16.

<sup>56</sup> I Cor. 4.16.

<sup>57</sup> 1 Tim. 4.12.

<sup>58</sup> Matt. 23.2,3.

## DISCOURSE ON PSALM 37

<sup>1</sup> The prefatory note to this Discourse merely states: *Sermo ad populum*. From the internal evidence of the text, it was preached at some place other than Carthage, during a Mass at which the Lesson was drawn from Ecclesiasticus 10, the Gospel from Matthew 15, and the present Psalm was sung at the Gradual. *Corpus christianorum* assigns it to March 395, at Hippo.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine uses the phrase *curam geram* from the African Psalter, which is nearer the Greek than the Vulgate *cogitabo*; Douay, *will think*.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 15.26.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 1.3.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 5.5.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine prefers to use *indignatio* when Vg. uses *furor*. Cf. *Enarr. in ps.* 87, n. 7: *Furor quippe, sicut se latinum habet eloquium, non solet esse sanorum*.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 25.41,42.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. 3.12,15.

<sup>9</sup> Gen. 2.17. Much that follows here is a refutation of Pelagianism with its denial of original sin.

<sup>10</sup> Eph. 2.3.

<sup>11</sup> Rom. 8.23-25.

<sup>12</sup> *Salutem*. See First Discourse on Psalm 33, note 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Animi*.

<sup>14</sup> Job 6.4.

<sup>15</sup> Cant. 2.5; 5.8. Vg. has *quia amore langueo*; Douay, *that I languish with love*.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor. 15.53.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Peter 2.22.

<sup>18</sup> Eph. 5.30.

<sup>19</sup> Ps. 21.2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 19.

<sup>21</sup> Matt. 27.46.

<sup>22</sup> *Quia caput ipsius ipse pronuntiavit* may mean "since He Himself, the Head of the Body, uttered it." Possibly Augustine is playing upon words and intends the double meaning.

<sup>23</sup> Eph. 5.31,32.

<sup>24</sup> Matt. 19.4-6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 25.42-45.

<sup>26</sup> Acts 9.4.

<sup>27</sup> *Sustulerunt*, the African version used here, is a literal translation from the Greek. Vg. and the Gallican Psalter use *supergressae sunt*; Douay, *are gone over*.

<sup>28</sup> Ecclus. 10.14.

<sup>29</sup> Ps. 7.17.

<sup>30</sup> 2 Cor. 2.15.

<sup>31</sup> Cant. 1.3.

<sup>32</sup> *Miseriis afflicti sum*. Vg. has *Miser factus sum*; Douay, *I am become miserable*.

<sup>33</sup> Wisd. 9.15.

<sup>34</sup> *Anima mea completa est*. Vg. has *lumbi mei impleti sunt*; Douay, *my loins are filled*.

<sup>35</sup> 1 Cor. 2.8.

<sup>36</sup> John 14.8,9,21.

<sup>37</sup> Ps. 30.23. In the passage on prayer which follows, Augustine is speaking the language of all the great contemplatives.

<sup>38</sup> 2 Cor. 12.2-10.

<sup>39</sup> 1 Cor. 15.50.

<sup>40</sup> Matt. 6.6.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Thess. 5.17.

<sup>42</sup> Matt. 24.12.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 5.44; Luke 6.27.

<sup>44</sup> Gen. 3.8.

<sup>45</sup> 1 Cor. 15.45.

<sup>46</sup> John 14.21.

<sup>47</sup> 1 John 3.2.

<sup>48</sup> 2 Cor. 5.6,7.

<sup>49</sup> Rom. 8.25.

<sup>50</sup> Ps. 18.13,14.

<sup>51</sup> Matt. 20.22.

<sup>52</sup> *Proximi mei.* Vg. has *qui juxta me erant*; Douay, *they that were near me.*

<sup>53</sup> Matt. 22.16.

<sup>54</sup> John 2.25.

<sup>55</sup> Matt. 22.18.

<sup>56</sup> Isa. 29.13.

<sup>57</sup> Matt. 26.70.

<sup>58</sup> John 21.17.

<sup>59</sup> Ps. 141.5.

<sup>60</sup> *Mala mea . . . vanitatem.* Vg. has *mala mihi . . . vanitates*; Douay, *evils to me . . . vain things.*

<sup>61</sup> Matt. 26.59,60.

<sup>62</sup> Isa. 53.9.

<sup>63</sup> Matt. 28.13. A favorite thought; cf. Second Discourse on Psalm 36, note 45.

<sup>64</sup> *Argutiones.* Vg. has *redargutiones.*

<sup>65</sup> Matt. 23.13.

<sup>66</sup> Isa. 53.7.

<sup>67</sup> *Insultent.* Vg. has *supergaudiant*; Douay, *rejoice over.*

<sup>68</sup> Gal. 6.1.

<sup>69</sup> Ps. 12.5.

<sup>70</sup> Prov. 3.11,12; Heb. 12.5,6.

<sup>71</sup> Rom. 8.32.

<sup>72</sup> 1 Peter 2.22.

<sup>73</sup> Job 1.21.

<sup>74</sup> This is clearly a reminiscence of Ecclus. 5.5: *Be not without fear about sin forgiven, and add not sin to sin.*

<sup>75</sup> Ps. 143.12-15.

<sup>76</sup> *Persecutus sum justitiam.* Vg. has *sequebar bonitatem*; Douay, *I followed goodness.*



<sup>77</sup> *Perfecti secutus*—an untranslatable and hardly justified piece of etymological wordplay.

<sup>78</sup> *Et projecerunt me dilectum, tamquam mortuum abominatum*, possibly taken from a High Egyptian text of the Septuagint. A few MSS. of LXX include this sentence in verse 20. It finds an echo in Ps. 87.9: *posuerunt me abominationem sibi*.

<sup>79</sup> Deut. 21.23; Gal. 3.13.

<sup>80</sup> Manichean Docetism, which lingered on in the West as late as the fifth century, denied the reality of our Lord's human body, or of His birth and death, declaring that the crucifixion was mere visual deception. They distinguished between *Jesus patibilis*, light imprisoned in matter and darkness, and *Jesus impatibilis*, the unalloyed Good and pure Light.

<sup>81</sup> Rom. 8.34.

<sup>82</sup> Ps. 21.2; Matt. 27.46.

<sup>83</sup> Rom. 6.6.

<sup>84</sup> 1 Peter 1.10-12.

<sup>85</sup> Matt. 20.9.

# INDEXES



# INDEXES

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